THE MUSICAL INFLUENCE OF CONTINENTAL EUROPE IN ART SONG REPERTOIRE OF GREAT BRITAIN, THE UNITED STATES, AND CANADA

A Document Submitted to the College of

Graduate Studies and Research in support of the Thesis-Recitals Given

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Master of Music Performance

in the Department of Music

University of Saskatchewan

Saskatoon

By
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UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

College of Graduate Studies and Research

SUMMARY OF DOCUMENT IN SUPPORT OF THESIS-RECITALS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

DEGREE OF MASTER OF MUSIC PERFORMANCE

By Carolina Saturia Plata Ballesteros

Department of Music, University of Saskatchewan, Summer 2005

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THE MUSICAL INFLUENCE OF CONTINENTAL EUROPE IN ART SONG REPERTOIRE OF GREAT BRITAIN, THE UNITED STATES, AND CANADA

This document is the result of the research done in preparation for the two thesis-recitals given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Music Performance. The recitals and the document are devoted to selected art song composers from Great Britain, the United States, and Canada.

The purpose of the research was to obtain a historical and stylistic understanding of the repertoire to be performed in the thesis-recitals. The methodology used for the elaboration of this document included review of relevant literature, score analysis, listening to recordings by major performers, and the preparation for performance itself.

The first chapter is focused on the fact that Great Britain's most distinguished composers have been influenced by musical practices from the European continent. John Dowland, Henry Purcell, Benjamin Britten, and the composers from the so-called British Musical Renaissance are taken into account.

The second chapter is dedicated to three major figures in art song composition in the United States: Charles Griffes, Samuel Barber, and Ned Rorem. The chapter highlights the fact that these composers share two important features: their styles have roots in musical practices of continental Europe and today they are considered among the most truly American voices.

The third chapter focuses on Jean Coulthard, Violet Archer, and R. Murray Schafer as examples of how Canadian composers have used the European artistic heritage in the process of creating their own styles.

The document concludes that, in addition to creativity and personal artistic values, two other factors seem to have been important in allowing this group of composers to become models of the national voice of their own countries: a strong awareness of musical and literary heritage and an open acceptance of foreign influences.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I also extend immense gratitude to my family and friends for their constant support, without which the completion of my Master's degree would have been almost impossible.

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INTRODUCTION

Since this document is a by-product of the preparation of two thesis-recitals, the decisions concerning which composers and specific pieces to include were mainly based on relevant criteria for recital programming. Aspects such as a unifying link between the composers, suitability for the voice, appropriateness for grouping, and personal taste were taken into account. The selection of composers was made among prominent figures in art song of Great Britain, the United States, and Canada. However, neither the recitals nor the research document is intended to be comprehensive of all major composers from the three countries.

After an initial review of music by a number of composers, the influence of continental Europe on artists from Great Britain, the United States, and Canada began to reveal itself. It led to the decision of focusing both the recital and the research document on composers whose artistic foundations are largely Eurocentric and who have succeeded in establishing their own well-defined sense of style. The selected composers can be considered representative figures of art song composition in their respective countries. The composers from Great Britain are clearly among the most prominent figures within the art song genre, and their compositional styles truly represent what is recognized as a British sound. The composers from the United States have had a leading role in art song: they have gained historical significance, have become models for current composers, and their works are used in voice studios as teaching tools. The composers from Canada are distinguished figures in vocal writing in a young country that is still creating its own sense of musical identity. Concerning the repertoire of the twentieth century, these composers do not represent all the trends that arose during this period. For the most part, the pieces included in the recital are rooted in serious song traditions established before the twentieth century. Thus, certain twentieth-century musical trends such as experimentalism, serialism, and minimalism, are not represented.

1. THE MUSICAL INFLUENCE OF CONTINENTAL EUROPE IN GREAT BRITAIN'S MOST DISTINGUISHED COMPOSERS

Great Britain has had an uneven musical history. There have been periods in which it had an important role in the international music scene as well as periods in which its musical production had no impact in the international repertoire. In comparison with countries such as Germany, France, and Italy, the number of first-rate composers in Great Britain is relatively low. In terms of art song composers, there are just three of the highest stature: John Dowland, Henry Purcell and Benjamin Britten. One of the strongest features that these three composers have in common is the fact that they allowed musical influences from the European continent to make a significant impact in their styles.

At a lesser degree of international prominence, there is a group from the so-called British musical renaissance including Ralph Vaughan Williams, Roger Quilter, Gerald Finzi, and John Ireland, among others. This group of composers made a conscious effort to find a British national voice. For that purpose, they turned to British poetry, folk-music and earlier repertoire.

1.1 The Seventeenth Century

1.1.1 John Dowland (1563-1626)

At the end of the sixteenth century England experienced a flurry in music publishing that lasted until the 1630s. In this period, the English polyphonic song reached its culmination and two other genres gained prominence: the madrigal and the lute song.[1]

[1] David Greer, "Vocal Music I: Up to 1660", *The Blackwell History of Music in Britain,* vol. 3, ed. Ian Spink (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), p.138.

Most authors, including Ian Spink, David Greer and John Caldwell, agree that the success of John Dowland's *First Book of Ayres* (1597) was crucial to the previously mentioned flurry in lute song composition and publishing. Although there is enough evidence that the solo song accompanied by lute was practised before 1597, it is obvious that what began with Dowland's First Book was a new form of art. Besides the artistic qualities of Dowland's songs, a new type of publishing that included two methods of performance (solo with lute accompaniment and four-part song), contributed to increase the market for this book and promoted other composers to follow Dowland's procedure.[2]

One of the greatest influences in Dowland's style, and in a broader sense, in the development of English song at the turn of the seventeenth century, was that of the Italian monody.[3] Dowland travelled in Italy in the 1590s and therefore, he must have heard the "new music". It is very likely that Dowland came across Caccini at court in Florence. Besides that, works by Caccini and other Italian composers were known in England. Evidence of John Dowland's awareness of Caccini's work is the fact that two pieces by Caccini were included in Robert Dowland's *A musicall banquet* (1610). John Dowland not only provided three songs for this publication. It is probable that he was also responsible for the realization of the thorough-bass of the Caccini songs included in this book.[4]

The influence of the Italian monody can be appreciated in Dowland's careful treatment of the text. Melodic and rhythmic gestures, harmonic procedures, textural devices, and cadences, are always a response to poetry. Dowland's songs are very effective in expressing the feelings suggested in the text. The vocal line follows the

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[2] Ian Spink, *English Song, Dowland to Purcell* (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd, 1974), pp. 15-17; John Caldwell, *The Oxford History of English Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), vol. 1, p. 425; and Greer, "Vocal Music I: Up to 1660", *The Blackwell History of Music in Britain*, vol. 3, pp. 153-154.

[3] Greer, "Vocal Music I: Up to 1660", *The Blackwell History of Music in Britain,* vol. 3, p. 156.

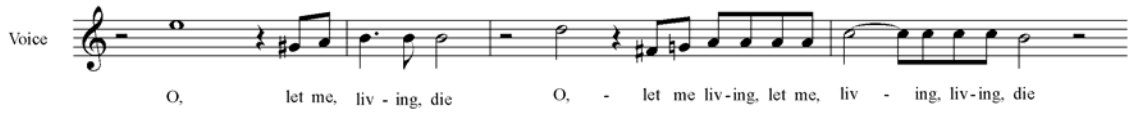
[4] Caldwell, *The Oxford History of English Music,* vol. 1, p. 427; Peter Holman and Paul O'Dette, "John Dowland", *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol. 7 (New York: Grove's Dictionaries, 2001), p. 532; and Greer, "Vocal Music I: Up to 1660", *The Blackwell History of Music in Britain*, vol. 3, p. 158.

accentuation of the spoken text, and the accompaniment is more chordal than contrapuntal. However, it is important to clarify that although Dowland's songs are mostly homophonic, they usually include some degree of contrapuntal activity in the accompaniment.

Another important influence in Dowland's compositional style was that of the *consort song,* an English tradition of solo song accompanied by a string ensemble which was cultivated especially by William Byrd and Orlando Gibbons. The influence of this type of song can be seen more clearly in Dowland's later works, which have preludes and interludes, a more contrapuntal texture, as well as a more extensive treatment of the text. Some of these songs also have accompanying parts for string instruments, reinforcing the similarity with the *consort song*.[5]

In darkness let me dwell is a strong sample of Dowland's compositional style. The piece reveals careful treatment of the text in terms of accentuation of the words and meaning. The influence of Italian monody is evident in the declamatory nature of the vocal line. Note for example the setting for the words "O, let me, living, die" (Example 1-1).

Example 1-1 John Dowland, voice part of *In darkness let me dwell,* measures 27-30

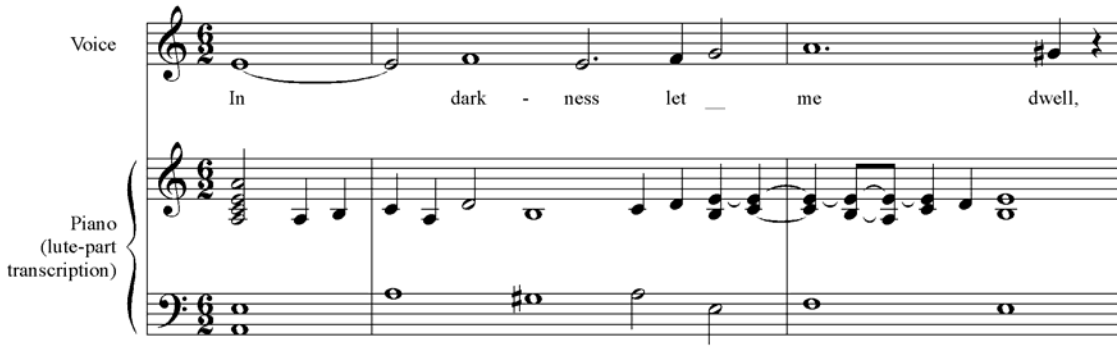


An important feature in Dowland's work is rhythmic flexibility. Dowland did not limit his compositions to a pre-established meter or rhythmic pattern, but rather allowed the rhythm to be determined by the needs of each poem. This can be appreciated in contrasting fragments within the same piece. Longer note values express desolation for the words "In darkness let me dwell" and more active rhythm expresses despair in "hellish jarring sounds" (Examples 1-2 and 1-3). Dowland was also very effective in

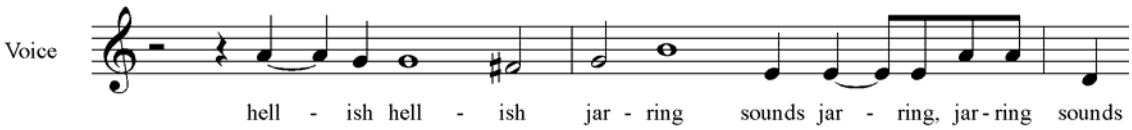
[5] Greer, "Vocal Music I: Up to 1660", *The Blackwell History of Music in Britain,* vol. 3, p.156.

expressing the meaning of the words through harmony, as is demonstrated in the mourning mood created through suspensions in the first measures of *In darkness let me dwell* (Example 1-2).

Example 1-2 John Dowland, *In darkness let me dwell,* measures 4-6



Example 1-3 John Dowland, voice part of *In darkness let me dwell,* measures 17-18



1.1.2 Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

One of the strongest influences in the works of Dowland and the other lutenists was Italian monody. English interest in Italian music began in the early sixteenth century, continued throughout the seventeenth century and into the eighteenth century. During this time, Italian music continued to be available in England and the presence of Italian musicians in London promoted the dissemination of the works of the Italian masters.[6]

Some musicians who were in exile during Cromwell's reign (1649-1659) were in contact with, and developed a liking for, the French and Italian musical styles. Therefore, on their return to England they incorporated this knowledge and taste into the

[6] Wainwright, "Purcell and the English Baroque", *The Purcell Companion,* pp. 24-26.

musical scene. This was the case for Henry Cooke, who was appointed to direct music for the re-established Chapel Royal under Charles II.[7]

Charles II assumed the English throne in 1660. During his interregnum, he spent significant time at the French Court of Louis XIV, where he experienced a monarchy which extensively promoted the arts. Therefore, upon his arrival in England he tried to emulate this, surrounding himself with both sacred and secular music. Charles set up a private string band, brought recognized French musicians to London to train the English ones, paid for the studies of English musicians in France, and brought new French woodwind instruments with specialists to play them. Henry Purcell, who was born in 1659, will later benefit from all these favourable circumstances.[8]

Purcell was the son of a well-known London musician who recognized very early his son's talent and encouraged a musical career for him starting with the Choir of the Chapel Royal.[9] Purcell received an excellent music education and then worked for the French-influenced English court of the time, in a country which had admired Italian music for at least one and a half centuries. Purcell took full advantage of all these circumstances. His music became a unique blend of English, Italian, and French influences, resulting in some of the finest vocal music ever written.

Andrew Pinnock refers to the "exquisite expression of words" as the most widely praised Purcellian characteristic.[10] As a consequence of the influence of the Italian monody, the declamatory nature of the vocal line became a feature that remained in the songs of the most prominent English composers throughout the seventeenth century. Purcell was not the exception. Influenced by the musical trends of his time he explored the boundaries of the declamatory style. Note the quasi-recitative treatment of the text

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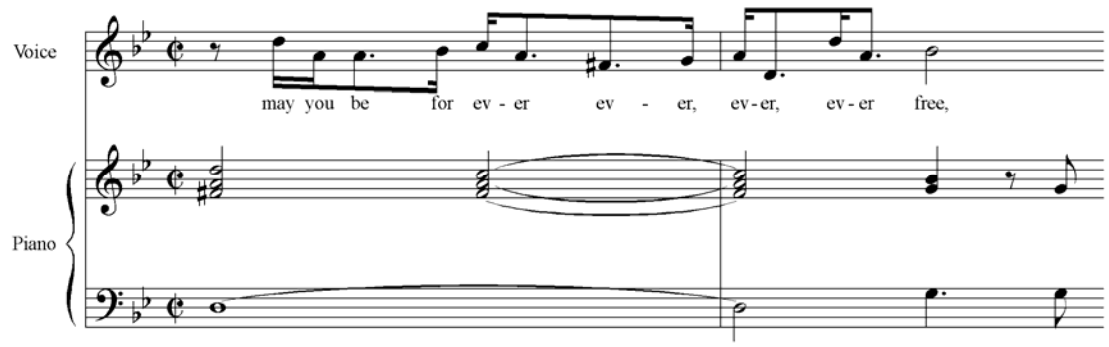
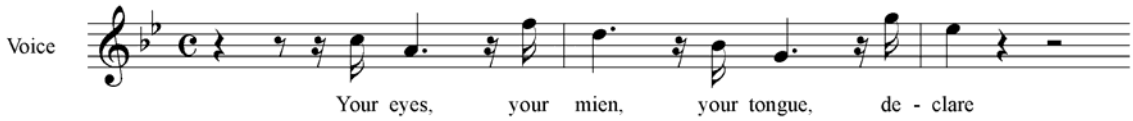
[7] Wainwright, "Purcell and the English Baroque", *The Purcell Companion,* p. 22; and Pinnock, "The Purcell Phenomenon", *The Purcell Companion,* p. 4.
[8] Jonathan P. Wainwright, "Purcell and the English Baroque", *The Purcell Companion* (Portland, Or.: Amadeus Press, 1995), p. 21; and Andrew Pinnock, "The Purcell Phenomenon", *The Purcell Companion,* p. 4.
[9] Pinnock, "The Purcell Phenomenon", *The Purcell Companion,* p. 3.
[10] Ibid. p. 7.

"may you be for ever free" in *Thrice happy lovers* (Example 1-4) and how the setting of "your eyes, your mien, your tongue, declare" (*If music be the food of love*) is carefully done to reflect the manner by which the text might be delivered if spoken (Example 1-5).

Example 1-4 Henry Purcell, *Thrice Happy Lovers (The Fairy Queen),* measures 6-7



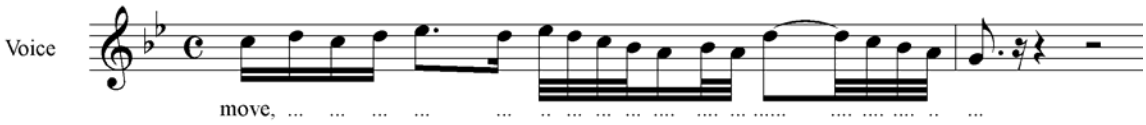
Example 1-5 Henry Purcell, voice part from *If music be the food of love (third version),* measures 19-21



Besides the declamatory nature of the vocal line, Purcell used the expressive device of portraying words by representative musical figures (text-painting).[11] Note for example the treatment given to the word "move" in *If music be the food of love* (Example 1-6).

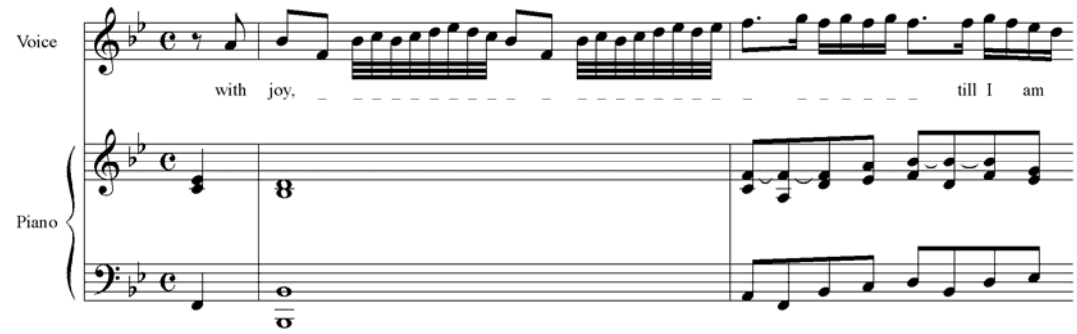
[11] Spink, "Vocal Music II: From 1660", *The Blackwell History of Music in Britain,* vol. 3, p. 182.

Example 1-6 Henry Purcell, voice part from *If music be the food of love (third version),* measure 13



The special treatment of words is both at the melodic and harmonic levels. For example, in *If music be the food of love*, which is in G-minor, there is a perfect authentic cadence in the relative major (B-flat) for the word "joy", suggesting a cheerful mood (Example 1-7).

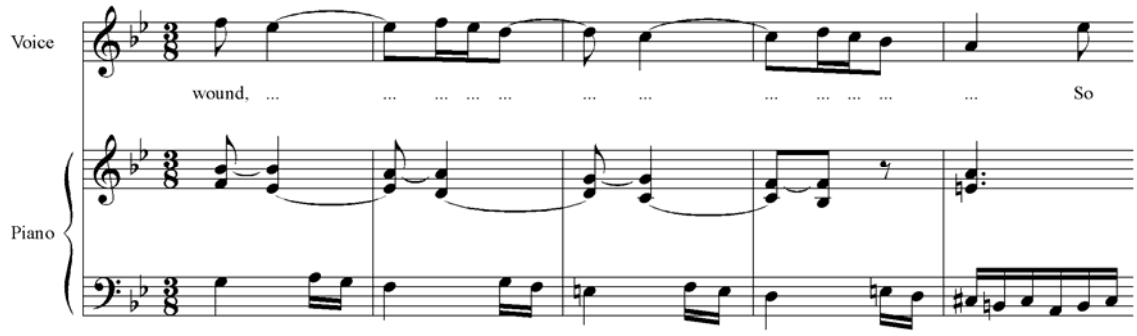
Example 1-7 Henry Purcell, *If music be the food of love (third version),* measures 9-10



Another feature of Purcell's text-painting is the use of dissonance and chromaticism to portray emotions.[12] In order to animate the word "wound", he uses a succession of suspensions which generate a series of discords (Example 1-8).

[12] Ibid. p. 182.

Example 1-8 Henry Purcell, *If music be the food of love (third version),* measures 51-55



In Purcell's works, the harmonic structure is carefully conceived to provide a background that makes it possible to express deep emotions. Certainly this feature was his application of what he learned from the Italian school.[13] Referring to this, Ian Spink says, "Purcell made no secret of his intention to learn from the Italians, and to adapt whatever might be of use in their music to his own ends."[14]

Both Henry Purcell and John Dowland had the ability to learn from musical practices in continental Europe and to find a way to use these musical resources to give vivid expression to the English language. After them, more than two hundred years passed before a British composer was again able to achieve a mastery of this kind.

1.2 The British Musical Renaissance

British music led the world in the fourteenth century and from then on held an important role right through the seventeenth century.[15] This is revealed in anonymous fourteenth-century polyphonic pieces, and in the prominence of later composers such as John Dunstaple (1390-1453), John Taverner (1490-1514), Thomas Tallis (1505-1585),

[13] Ibid. p. 183.
[14] Ibid. p. 187.
[15] Peter J. Pirie, *The English Musical Renaissance* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1979), p. 18.

William Byrd (1540-1623), John Wilbye (1574-1638), Thomas Weelkes (1576-1623), John Dowland (1563-1626), and Henry Purcell (1659-1695). However, from Purcell's death until the first works by Elgar, Great Britain was virtually silent in the international musical scene.[16] Otto Karolyi explains that the possible reasons for this silence still constitute a matter of debate. He suggests that the probable causes include the impact of the English Civil Wars of the seventeenth century, the industrial revolution, a native inclination toward pragmatism, a denial of music's role as a serious vehicle for thought and ideas, and even the fact that the British themselves began to believe in their own inferiority in musical matters.[17]

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century Great Britain underwent some transformations and began to see the emergence of promising composers. The dominance of the German culture was providing the seeds for a nationalist reaction in different countries such as Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Scandinavia, the United States, and Great Britain. However, the British assumption of the superiority of German music was still very strong, as Lewis Foreman maintains.[18] Therefore, the context for this period of art song composition was a country awakening from a large span of musical meagreness and still accepting continental European influences, while at the same time, trying to develop its own voice.

In their search for musical identity, composers of this period developed three major strategies:

a) The revival of folk music and its incorporation to the art of composition

b) The revival of earlier British musical repertoire (e.g. carols, hymns, and Tudor music)

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[16] Ibid. p. 18.
[17] Otto Karolyi, *Modern British Music, The Second British Musical Renaissance –From Elgar to P. Maxwell Davies* (Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1994), pp. 13-14.
[18] Lewis Foreman, *From Parry to Britten, British Music in Letters, 1900-1945* (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1987), p. 1.

c) The use of British poetry, both old and new, which meant, not only following the precedent of German *Lied* and French *mélodie*, but also and maybe more important, incorporating to music the art form in which Great Britain always excelled: literature.

1.2.1 The Rebirth of British Music circa 1900

From the mid–Victorian period to the 1930s there was an enormous market for ballads and art songs.[19] Several authors (John Caldwell, Stephen Banfield and Sydney Northcote) suggest that until 1900 it was not easy to make a differentiation between the "drawing-room ballad" (or "parlour ballad") and the "art song". Although in theory there are definitions that could be stated for each category, in practical terms there was a lot of overlapping between both genres. The ballad was much more a commercial entertainment. In musical terms, ballads were sentimental, strophic in form, and they had a very weak and sometimes non-existent relationship between music and text. The use of certain attractive musical clichés and stereotyped forms was so generalized that it was not easy to distinguish one from another.[20] Art song was intended to be a more serious composition based in a higher quality text and with a stronger relationship between music and poetry. However, the reality in Great Britain at this time was that there was no easy distinction between the two and some compositions and composers were somewhere in the middle of the two categories.[21] It is not by chance that neither the genres themselves, nor the composers gained international reputation. Stephen Banfield writes:

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[19] Stephen Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song, Critical Studies of the Early 20th Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1985), vol. 1, p. 1.
[20] Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Style & Literature* (Redmond, Washington: PST Inc., 2000), p.301; Sydney Northcote, *Byrd to Britten, A Survey of English Song* (New York: Roy Publishers, Inc., 1966), p. 97; and Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song, Critical Studies of the Early 20th Century*, vol. 1, p. 3.
[21] Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song, Critical Studies of the Early 20th Century*, vol. 1, p. 5.

> By comparison with the *Lieder* of Schumann, Brahms and Wolf, the *mélodies* of Bizet, Fauré, Duparc and Debussy, and the songs of Grieg, the overall impression is one of worthlessness. Whole volumes of mid- and late- Victorian songs and ballads by various composers are indistinguishable, showing a uniform lack of musical imagination.[22]

Although the commercial success of songs was constant between the 1870s and the 1930s, in the middle of this span there was a significant transformation and English song began to recover its aesthetic qualities. Composers were creating a whole new literary sensibility, and it coincided with a rapid widening of their technical resources.[23]

Composers Hubert Parry (1848-1918) and Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924) played an influential role in British song more for their role as teachers of the next generation of composers, than for their own compositions. In 1883, both Parry and Stanford were appointed as professors at the newly founded Royal College of Music (created to succeed the National Training School for Music). Stanford is best remembered for his list of pupils, which includes A. Benjamin, Bridge, Butterworth, Coleridge-Taylor, Dyson, Gurney, Howells, Hurlstone, Ireland, Moeran, and Vaughan Williams. Both Parry and Stanford began to go back to earlier British poets (e.g. Blake, Herrick, Lovelace, and Shakespeare) in their search for song-texts.[24]

Although Parry and Stanford intended to lead a revolutionary process in British music through the positions they held at the Royal College of Music, Cambridge, and Oxford, they suffered a certain degree of conservatism. Stanford and Parry supported the Schumann-Brahms tradition, thinking this was the direction in which British music had to go. They encouraged their students to use these composers as models. Both Parry and Stanford had an awareness of Wagner's work, but neither man showed a clear influence of that in their song production or in their teaching. Although Parry studied with Edward

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[22] Ibid. p. 3.
[23] Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song, Critical Studies of the Early 20th Century*, vol. 1, p. 3; and Stephen Banfield, "Vocal Music", The Blackwell History of Music in Britain, vol. 6, (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), p. 465-466.
[24] Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Style & Literature*, p. 302; and Jeremy Dibble, "Parry, Sir Hubert" and "Stanford, Sir Charles Villiers", *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy (Accessed 05 April 2004), Site Address: http://www.grovemusic.com

Dannreuther (a Wagner champion), and Stanford studied and in some degree admired Wagnerian music-drama, both of them considered Wagner's later works unacceptable. Furthermore, neither Parry nor Stanford wanted to import the Brahms-Wagner debate over compositional styles that had divided German musical life in the late nineteenth century. They thought that the English musical renaissance needed unity instead of debate.[25]

1.2.2 Musical Examples by Major Composers of the British Musical Renaissance

1.2.2.1 Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

Ralph Vaughan Williams was a pupil of Hubert Parry, Charles Stanford, and Charles Wood between 1891 and 1896. Later he studied with Max Bruch in Berlin in 1897 and with Maurice Ravel in Paris in 1908. In addition to his university education, he had a strong appreciation for fine poetry.[26] The musical style of Vaughan Williams is thus a complex mix of influences: contemporary German and English music, English hymns, music of Henry Purcell, music of the Tudor composers, folk music, renaissance music, and French music by Fauré, Debussy, and Ravel.[27]

While many songs by Vaughan Williams reveal a strong influence of folk music, *Nocturne* is a piece that reflects more clearly the influence of French Impressionism. In this piece Vaughan Williams uses an ostinato in a similar way to Debussy's most clear application of the impressionist technique, that being the use of certain musical material

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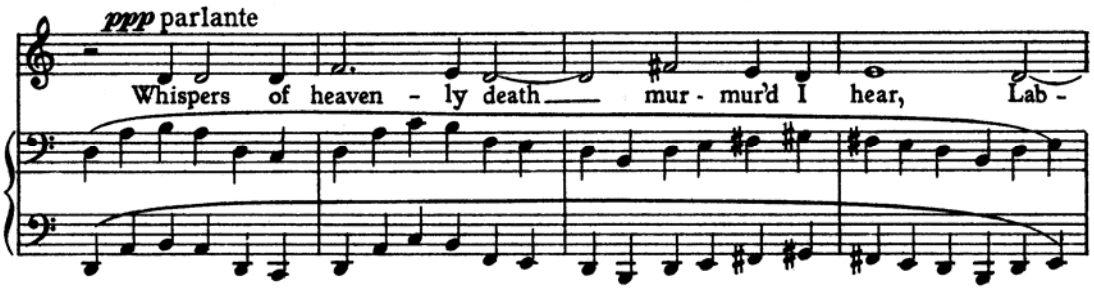
[25] Meirion Hughes and Robert Stradling, *The English Musical Renaissance 1840-1940, Constructing a National Music;* 2nd ed. (New York: Manchester University Press, 2001), pp. 37, 56.

[26] Hugh Ottaway and Alain Frogley, "Vaughan Williams, Ralph: Early life and beliefs", *Grove Music Online* ed. L. Macy (Accessed 04 April 2004),
Site address: http://www.grovemusic.com; Karolyi, *Modern British Music, The Second British Musical Renaissance –From Elgar to P.Maxwell Davies,* p. 25; and Caldwell, *The Oxford History of English Music,* vol. 2, p. 282.

[27] Karolyi, *Modern British Music, The Second British Musical Renaissance –From Elgar to P.Maxwell Davies,* p. 25-27

as an equivalent to the "fixed object" of impressionist painters (e.g. the same cathedral under different light contexts).[28] Examples 1-9 to 1-11 reveal how Vaughan Williams uses an eight-bar ostinato (just four measures are shown in the examples) as the "fixed object". Presenting the ostinato in different musical contexts (harmony, texture, mode) Vaughan Williams achieves a variety of colours and effects through the song. In the first presentation of the ostinato (Example 1-9), it is simply reinforced at the octave and the voice is in low range with markings *ppp* and *parlante.*

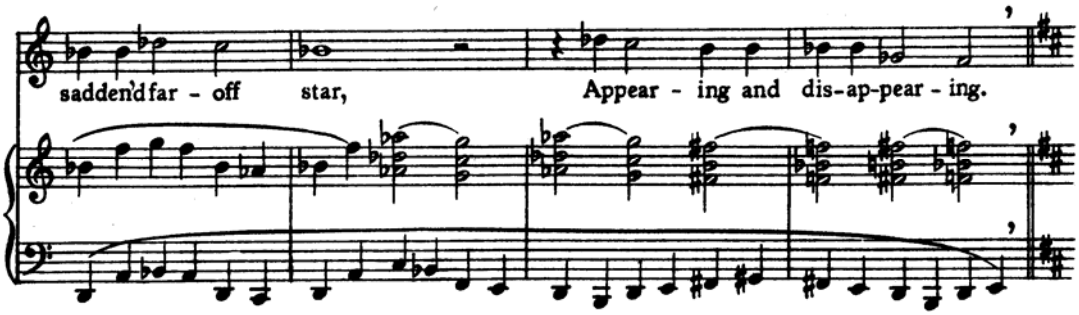
Example 1-9 Ralph Vaughan Williams, *Nocturne*, measures 5-8, ostinato reinforced at the octave



In the fifth presentation (Example 1-10), the ostinato is still in the left hand of the piano but the B is flatted and it provokes a change in colour. The right hand of the piano begins in parallel motion to the ostinato at an interval of a sixth, but then turns into a series of simultaneous parallel fourths and fifths. Beginning in the third beat of measure 52, the chromatic movement of the voice and the right hand of the piano contributes to generate a vaporous background for the words "appearing and disappearing".

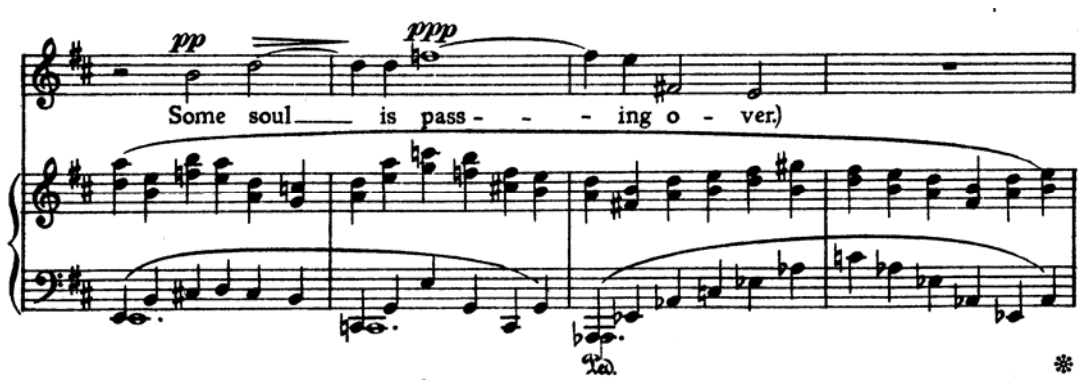
[28] Roy Howat, "Claude Debussy. 10. Musical Language", *Grove Music Online* ed. L.

Example 1-10 Ralph Vaughan Williams, *Nocturne*, measures 51-54, ostinato with B-flat



In the last presentation (Example 1-11), the ostinato is in the upper part of the right hand of the piano, and has underneath a melody in similar (not parallel) motion that generates mostly perfect fourths and tritones, but also some thirds, sixths and fifths.

Example 1-11 Ralph Vaughan Williams, *Nocturne*, measures 63-66, ostinato with accompanying melody in similar motion



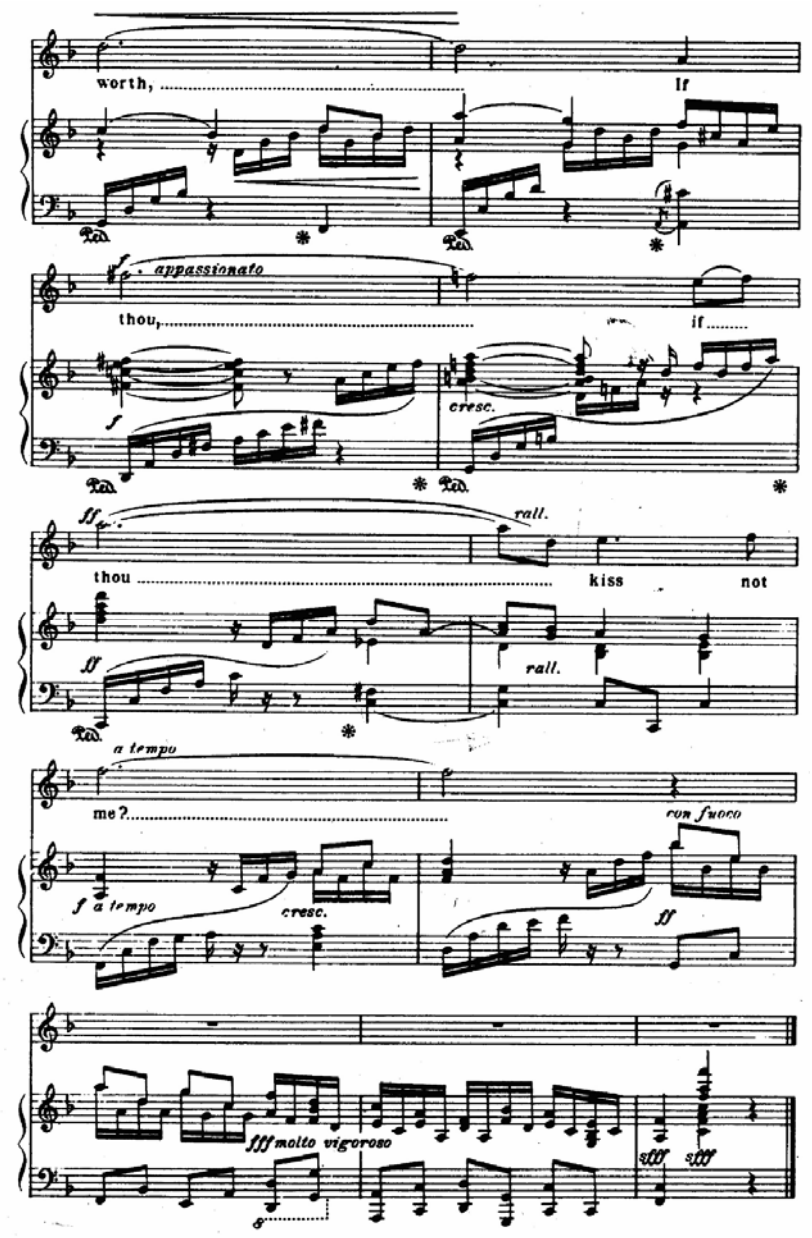
1.2.2.2 Roger Quilter (1877-1953)

Melody constitutes one of the major strengths in Roger Quilters' style. His melodic ability is coupled with his love for English poetry and excellent sense of prosody.[29] A strong example of Quilter's style is *Love's Philosophy* (Shelley), where he uses a continuous and increasing motion that reminds some of Schubert's *Lieder* (e.g., *Gretchen am Spinnrade, Rastlose Liebe*). In *Love's Philosophy* everything points to the

Macy (Accessed 07 February 2005), Site address: http://www.grovemusic.com
[29] Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Style & Literature*, p. 316.

climax which arrives at the end of the song in the sentence “What are all these kissings worth, if thou, if thou kiss not me?” The almost always present sixteenth-notes in the accompaniment contribute to the sense of motion and direction, both emotionally and musically, toward the climax (Example 1-12).

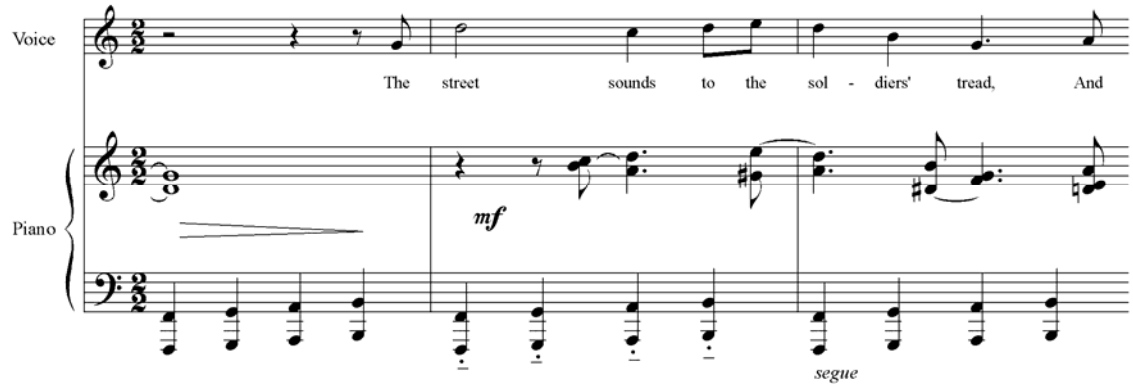
Example 1-12 Roger Quilter, *Love’s Philosophy*, measures 37-48



1.2.2.3 John Ireland (1879-1962)

John Ireland studied with Stanford from 1897 to 1901 and his earlier music education was strongly based on German models (Beethoven, Brahms). During his twenties and thirties, Ireland felt strongly attracted by French (Debussy, Ravel) and also Russian (Stravinsky) music.[30] Ireland's harmonic style gives the text a clear expression by creating and intensifying moods and images in the verse. Ireland also followed the English early twentieth-century trend toward a text-oriented style of composition with a syllabic approach to word-setting.[31] These features can be appreciated in *The Encounter* (Example 1-13). The poem depicts a couple who make eye contact during a soldiers' march, but probably would not meet because he is going to war. The march-like ostinato in the left hand of the piano —which melodically defines a tritone— represents in itself much of the ironic mood of the piece. Harmonically, this ironic mood is enhanced by the use of dissonant intervals, especially minor and major 2nds. In terms of rhythm, the continuous quarter-note movement of the left hand of the piano is reinforced with dotted rhythms in the right hand and the voice part enhancing the association with military march.

Example 1-13 John Ireland, *The Encounter,* measures 4-6



[30] Bruce Philips, The John Ireland Charitable Trust [Web site], "Biography of John Ireland" (Accessed 27 June 2005), Site address: http://www.musicweb-international.com/ireland/biog.htm

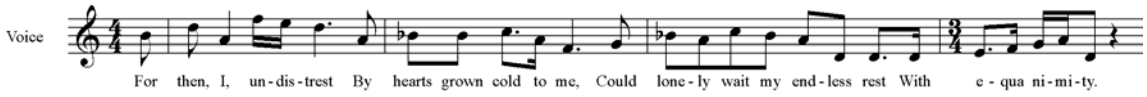
[31] Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Style & Literature,* pp. 318-319.

1.2.2.4 Gerald Finzi (1901-1956)

Although Finzi employs poetry by several authors, a significant part of his song output is based in Thomas Hardy's poetry. Hardy and Finzi had different life experiences. Hardy was active, restless, and controversial. His marriage became conflicting, and his wife died suddenly in 1912. Finzi had a sad childhood, but later married happily and devoted himself to compose in a quiet rural environment. In spite of these differences, Hardy and Finzi shared essential views and feelings about life. Finzi himself described his relationship with Hardy not as an influence, but as an intellectual kinship.[32] This kind of artistic affinity between composer and poet could be paralleled with others, for example, that of Schumann and Heine or Fauré and Verlaine. In Finzi's case, it is not an exaggeration to say that his style is defined in Hardy's poetry.

Finzi's musical language could be described as traditional. His modal language has roots in his study of sixteenth-century counterpoint and his diatonic works show strong influence of Parry and J. S. Bach.[33] Finzi's vocal lines follow the shapes of the spoken text and, like many of his British contemporaries, he uses one note to each syllable. Example 1-14 shows these features.

Example 1-14 Gerald Finzi, voice part from *I Look Into My Glass*, measures 7-10



[32] Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song, Critical Studies of the Early 20th Century*, vol. 1, pp. 275-287.
[33] Ibid. p. 280.

The phenomenon of English art song followed both the development of German *Lied* and French *mélodie*, and it could be seen as a response to them.[34] What happened in song composition in Great Britain at the beginning of the twentieth century is very similar to what occurred in Germany one hundred years before. Both processes included:

a) A division between popular and serious song, which had been indistinguishable.[35] It also implied the transition of song from a salon activity to a concert genre.[36]
b) A stronger interest in setting high-quality local poetry
c) A willingness to incorporate folk tradition into art song as an important element of national identity

In Great Britain, the search for musical identity did not preclude external influences. The movement was attempting to avoid the absolute domination of the German musical models, which in fact continued to have a significant influence in many of the English composers of this period. For some of them the main influence came from Schumann and Brahms, for others, from Wagner. As mentioned before, in addition to the German, the French influence was also a strong one that had a significant impact upon several composers, especially through the music of Fauré, Ravel and Debussy.

1.3 Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) as a Songwriter

Frank Bridge was Britten's first composition teacher and became an important influence upon him. The lessons not only introduced rigour into the young composer's work but also stimulated and guided his creative impulse.[37] Even when Britten began to study at the Royal College of Music with John Ireland as composition teacher, Bridge continued

[34] Banfield, "Vocal Music", *The Blackwell History of Music in Britain*, vol. 6, p. 404.
[35] Geoffrey Chew, "Song, 9. 1815-1910", *Grove Music Online* ed. L. Macy (Accessed 16 June 2005), Site address: http://www.grovemusic.com
[36] Ibid. p. 404.

to be influential. Bridge was guiding Britten's interests toward modernism by exposing him to new music, while Ireland was trying to push his pupil to the vocal-pastoral model. After 1933, Britten clearly showed his inclinations: among the contemporary composers, he admired Berg, Stravinsky, Schönberg, Bridge, and few others.[38]

Benjamin Britten's international success is well deserved. His compositional output reflects creative eclecticism, resourcefulness, flexibility, outstanding musicality, poetical feeling, and formidable technique. Britten recognized several weaknesses in British music and therefore, he looked at composers of the European continent as musical models in the process of developing his personal style. Peter Pears explains:

> [Britten] felt early that the academic tradition in [his] country was built on stale amateurishness and pretentious muddle. He learnt that as a result of the explosions in the musical world of the first decades of the [twentieth century], the young composer had to build his own tradition. In endeavouring to do this, Britten has gone to the purest stream of modern music. Monteverdi, Purcell, Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Schubert, Verdi and, of later figures, Mahler, Berg and Stravinsky.[39]

More than half of Britten's works are settings of words, including operas, choral works, songs, and song cycles.[40] When Britten was a student of the Royal College of Music, John Ireland tried to introduce him to the technique of writing a song with a note to each syllable. Britten reacted against it. He did not support the increasing tendency to express the emotional life of a song through harmony in the accompaniment, which gives the voice a merely declamatory role.[41] This trend was especially strong in English song before the Second World War: syllabic voice parts and highly interventionist accompaniments characterize much of that repertoire. Therefore, paradoxically, it is the

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[37] Philip Brett, "Benjamin Britten", *Grove Music Online* ed. L. Macy (Accessed 05 April 2004), Site address: http://www.grovemusic.com
[38] Ibid.
[39] Peter Pears, "The Vocal Music", *Benjamin Britten, a Commentary on His Works from a Group of Specialists*, ed. Donald Mitchell and Hans Keller (London: Rockliff Publishing Corporation Limited, 1952) p. 73.
[40] Timothy Day, Preface to the recording of Benjamin Britten, *The Canticles* (London: Decca Record Company Limited CD 425 716-2, 1990), p. 5.
[41] Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song, Critical Studies of the Early 20th Century,* vol. 2, p. 384.

piano that acts as the poet's voice.[42] Britten preferred to give that role to the singer using rhythm, contour, structure, and color. [43]

Britten found a much more inspiring model of vocal writing in Henry Purcell, whom he saw as more connected with the notion of song as sung melody. This means that melody "is frequently self-sufficient in thematic material, harmony and rhythm."[44] Britten studied, performed, admired, and made realizations of Purcell's music. Eric Roseberry states that Henry Purcell was probably the greatest single influence in Britten's development of his own vocal and operatic style.[45] In the preface to his opera *Peter Grimes* (1944-45) Britten wrote: "One of my chief aims is to try to restore to the musical setting of the English language a brilliance, freedom, and vitality that have been curiously rare since the death of Purcell."[46]

Both the influence of Purcell and the freedom of Britten's vocal lines can be appreciated in *Death, be not proud* from *The Holy Sonnets of John Donne*[47]*, Op. 35.* The song is based on a ground bass and the voice is full of character, with a rhythmic and melodic freedom that gives it a strong expressive power according to the demands of the poem. For example, in measures 36 to 44 the voice line acquires an unpredictable quality with syncopations (Example 1-15, measures 36-41) and Purcellian melismas (Example 1-15, measures 42-43).

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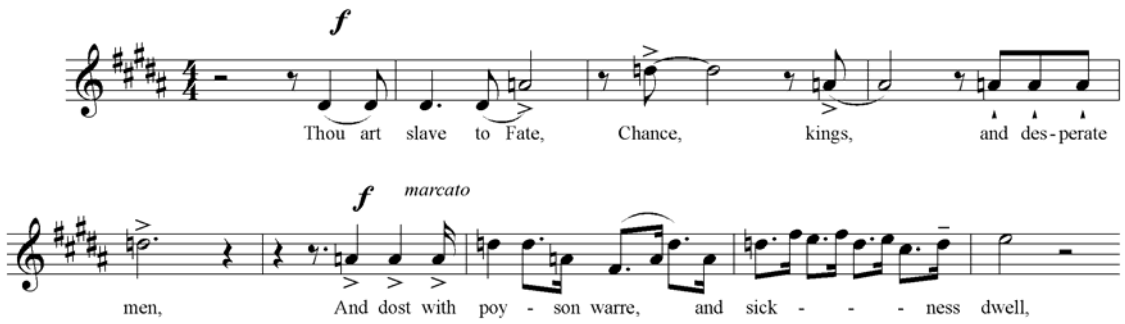
[42] Banfield, "Vocal Music" *The Blackwell History of Music in Britain,* vol. 6. Oxford, p. 472.
[43] Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song, Critical Studies of the Early 20th Century,* vol. 2, p. 384.
[44] Ibid. p. 472.
[45] Eric Roseberry, "The Purcell Realizations" *The Britten Companion,* ed. Christopher Palmer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 287.
[46] Quoted in Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Style & Literature,* p. 335.
[47] English poet. Donne was born in 1572 and died in 1631.

Example 1-15 Benjamin Britten, voice part from *Death, be not proud* (*The Holy Sonnets of John Donne)*, measures 36-44

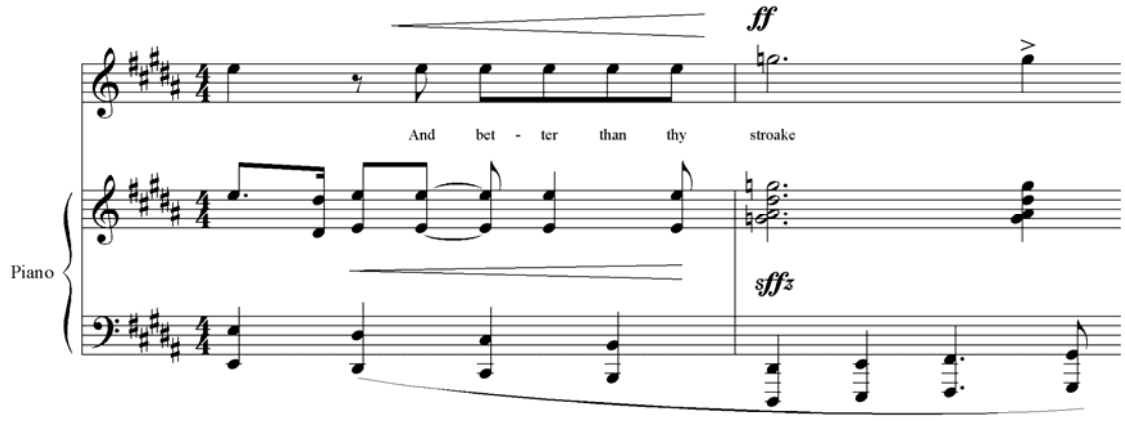


Britten composed for specific singers, and it is likely that this influenced his vocal writing. Carol Kimball states that there is no doubt that a significant part of Britten's knowledge of writing for the voice was a result of his close association with tenor Peter Pears and many other fine singers of his time.[48] Stephen Banfield identifies Britten's willingness and ability to build a song using a vocal melody that at same time is structural and encapsulates the song's mood.[49] It is broadly accepted that Britten's melodies have the ability to create moods and images and to suggest movement and gesture.

At the climatic point of *Death, be not proud*, Britten takes the voice to a *fortissimo* G-natural for the word "stroake", supported by a powerful *sforzando* chord and octave doubling. The combined effect of both the voice and the accompaniment is just one example of Britten's ability to create moods and imagery (Example 1-16).

[48] Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Style & Literature*, p. 335.
[49] Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song, Critical Studies of the Early 20th Century*, p. 384.

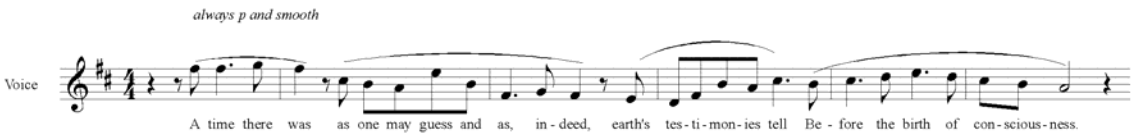
Example 1-16 Benjamin Britten, *Death, be not proud* (*The Holy Sonnets of John Donne)*, measures 46-47



Before Life and After (*Winter Words*, Op. 52), based on Thomas Hardy's poem *A Time There Was,* is another example of a song with a vocal melody that plays an important role in creating the song's mood. Britten felt strongly attracted by the notion of return to a perfect state, which is strongly related to innocence, childhood, or "nescience" (the word used by Hardy to refer to this state). Britten's sympathy with Hardy's text in this song effectively expresses both the calm of that perfect state and the pain of having lost it. This is achieved by means of contour, rhythm, chromaticism, and dynamics.

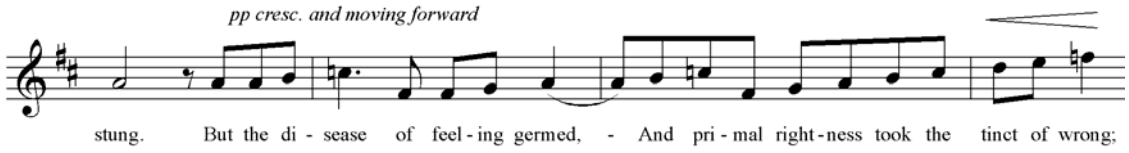
In terms of contour, the vocal melody alternates between ascending and descending motion before the beginning of the climax (Example 1-17).

Example 1-17 Benjamin Britten, voice part from *Before Life and After* (*Winter Words)*, measures 1-6



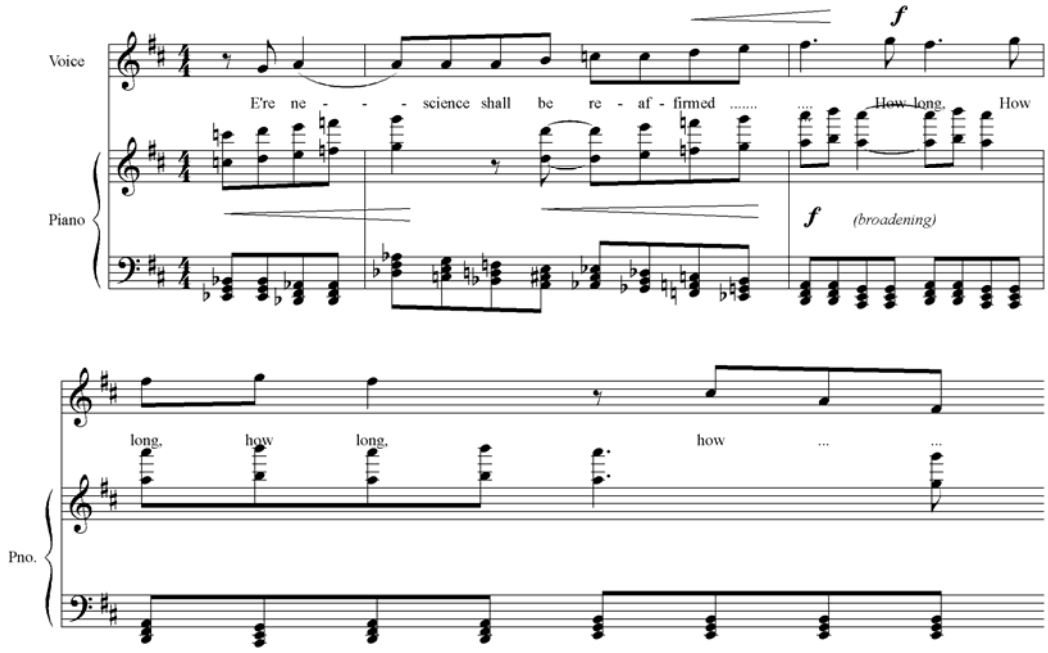
When the climax begins, the melody takes a stepwise ascending movement with occasional descending skips that function as new impulses for the rising line. At the end of the sentence “But the disease of feeling germed, and primal rightness took the tinct of wrong”, the voice part arrives at F-natural (which does not belong to the D-major key) in the word “wrong” (Example 1-18).

Example 1-18 Benjamin Britten, voice part from *Before Life and After* (*Winter Words),* measures 25-28



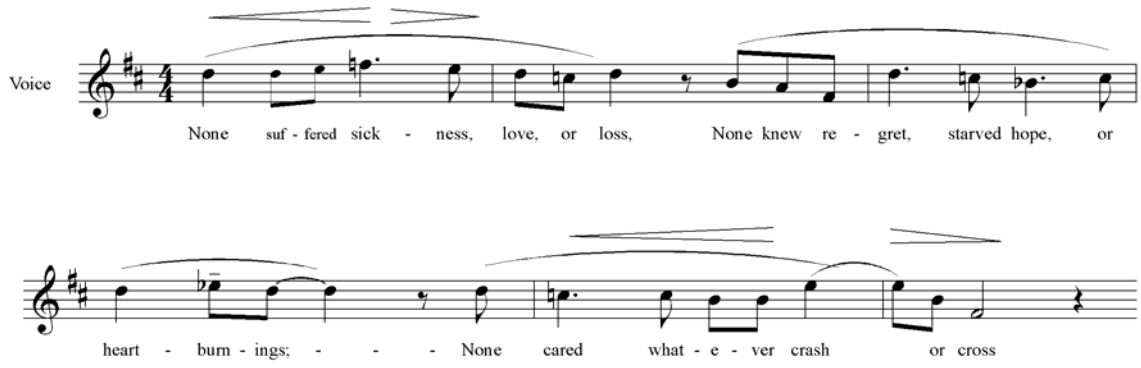
Then, a new melodic ascending motion aspires to the F-sharp, thereby affirming a D-major chord for the ending of the statement “Before nescience shall be reaffirmed” (Example 1-19, measure 30). A rhythmic-melodic pattern that resembles the beginning of the voice part in measure 1 (Example 1-17), is now heard for the words “How long?” in measures 30 and 31 (Example 1-19). This pattern that is heard at the beginning of the song as a very calmed motif, in the climax is anguished at the lost nescience.

Example 1-19 Benjamin Britten, *Before Life and After* (*Winter Words),* measures 28-31



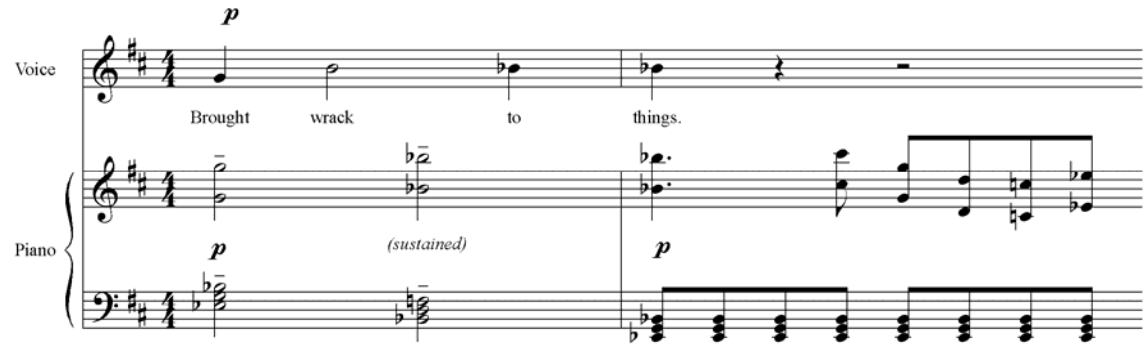
Chromaticism in the vocal line is introduced in measure 9 when the text begins to refer to sickness and other usual human sufferings (Example 1-20).

Example 1-20 Benjamin Britten, voice part from *Before Life and After* (*Winter Words),* measures 9-14



In terms of rhythm, changes to longer note values in the vocal line and the accompaniment are used to create a calmer mood (Example 1-21).

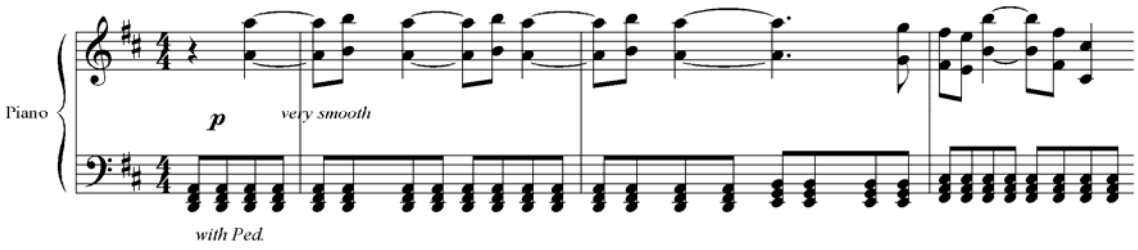
Example 1-21 Benjamin Britten, *Before Life and After* (*Winter Words),* measures 15-16



The dynamic is maintained in a *piano* level with some subtle changes until the beginning of the climax when *crescendo and moving forward* is indicated to reach the *forte* level in measure 30 (Example 1-19)

The piano part has a clear differentiation between right and left hand. The left hand is constructed exclusively with chords, while the right hand has a more melodic role that includes some material from the voice part (Example 1-22). The frequency of changes in the chords of the piano part, as well as the chromaticism, increases with the approximation to the climax (Example 1-19).

Example 1-22 Benjamin Britten, piano part from *Before Life and After* (*Winter Words),* measures 1-3



Any description of Britten as a songwriter would be incomplete without mentioning his relationship to poetry and poets. Britten's compositional output is strongly related to words and poetical feeling. He had an educated literary taste, and was impressive because of the high quality of the verse he set. Furthermore, he is different from other vocal composers in the fact that, the finer the poem, the better the composition he produced.[50] The list of the writers he set includes Auden, Rimbaud, Quarles, Hardy, Owen, Hölderlin, Pushkin, Soutar, Eliot, Tennyson, Keats, Donne, Wordsworth, and Shakespeare.

Like John Dowland and Henry Purcell, Benjamin Britten developed an inimitable personal style achieved through an open acceptance of influences from the European continent, without neglecting national elements. Britten fully accomplished his aim to restore to the musical setting of the English language its brilliance, freedom, and vitality.

British composers have achieved better results when they have been acquainted with a variety of foreign musical trends. Dowland, Purcell, Britten, and some of the composers of the British Musical Renaissance skilfully combined the excellence of British literature with the brilliance of European music. Their songs challenge the generalized perception that English is an unmusical language. Binding artistry and technique, these composers created some of the best vocal pieces ever written in the English language.

[50] Peter Porter, "Composer and Poet", *The Britten Companion,* ed. Christopher Palmer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 271-274.

2. THREE AMERICAN VOICES ROOTED ON EUROPEAN MODELS: CHARLES GRIFFES, SAMUEL BARBER, AND NED ROREM

This chapter deals with three important American song-composers whose styles have strong ties with continental Europe: Charles Griffes, Samuel Barber, and Ned Rorem.

2.1 Charles T. Griffes (1884-1920)

American composer Charles T. Griffes studied in Berlin between 1903 and 1907, making easy to identify the first roots of his compositional style in German romanticism. While in Germany, Griffes was able to attend live performances of the songs of Richard Strauss, Hugo Wolf, Johannes Brahms, Richard Wagner, Robert Schumann, Franz Schubert, and Robert Franz. Griffes felt very attracted to this repertoire. In fact, he composed twenty-five songs to German texts. The influence of the German composers that he was frequently hearing and studying is evident in these songs.[1] Griffes stated that his early German songs were "more the result of composition study than his own musical expression."[2]

Around 1910, three years after having returned to the United States, Griffes began to abandon his strong ties with the Germanic style and to allow other music to make an impact on him. These new influences included music from France (Debussy and Ravel) and Russia (Mussorgsky and Scriabin). Griffes's music began to be more suggestive of time and place, characterized by elusive tonality, use of ninth and eleventh

[1] Edward Maisel, Preface to the recording of Charles Griffes, *The Songs of Charles T. Griffes*, p. 5.
[2] Quoted in Donna K. Anderson, *Charles T. Griffes, A Life in Music* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), p. 185.

chords, polychords, parallelism, more chromaticism, and more rhythmic flexibility. His music became more impressionistic in style and reflected more of his own creativity.[3]

In 1916 and 1917, Griffes also allowed his lifelong interest in oriental culture to influence his music. He was attracted by oriental scales, non-western instrumental ensembles and had avidly read Lafcadio Hearns's descriptions of travel in Eastern Asia. Griffes also developed a friendship with American soprano Eva Gauthier who had traveled to the Far-East, where she studied and collected native music of Japan and Java. Gauthier gave Griffes some of that material and from it he composed *Three Javanese Songs* and *Sho-jo*.[4]

The diverse musical influences surrounding Griffes enabled him to create his personal style. Donna K. Anderson states that after reviewing the multiplicity of influences in Griffes's style, as well as his output as a composer, the most outstanding factors are his creativity, originality and individuality. Anderson also emphasises the fact that the diversity of styles found in Griffes's works is a consequence of his strong desire to express as clearly as possible what he wanted to say as an artist. Griffes's usage of a certain musical device was always a result of what he wanted to say, instead of an intention to follow or emulate a specific aesthetic trend.[5]

The *Three Poems for Voice and Piano*, Op. 9 can be used to illustrate some aspects of Griffes's style. In the first song of the group, *In a Myrtle Shade*, Griffes progressively builds toward a climax reminiscent of the passion and lyricism found in the songs of Richard Strauss.

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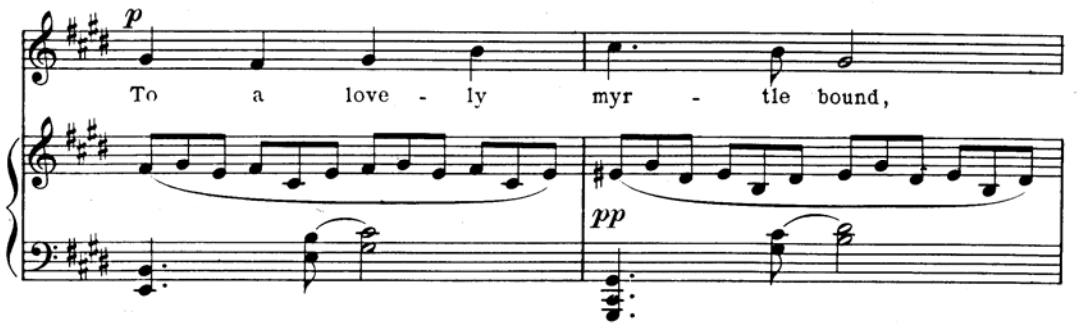
[3] Nicholas E. Tawa, *Mainstream Music of Early Twentieth Century America, The Composers, Their Times and Their Works* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992), pp. 142-143.

[4] Donna K. Anderson, *Charles T. Griffes, A Life in Music,* p. 189-192; and Nicholas E. Tawa, *Mainstream Music of Early Twentieth Century America, The Composers, Their Times and Their Works,* p. 144.

[5] Donna K. Anderson, *Charles T. Griffes, A Life in Music,* p. 197.

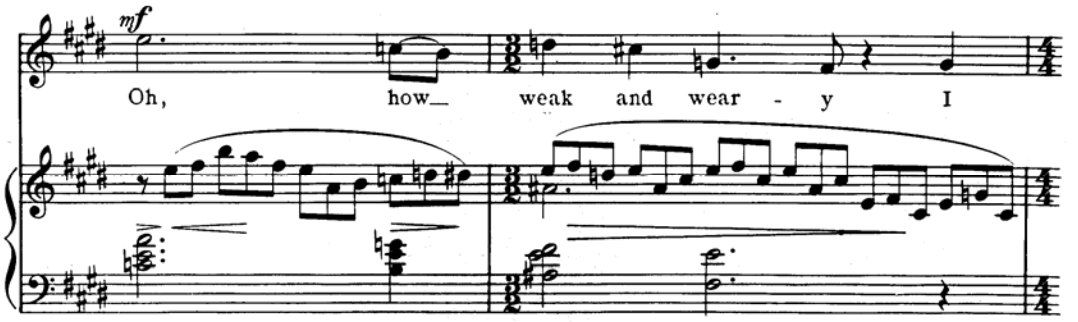
After a piano introduction, the voice begins with a melody in a *piano* dynamic level (Example 2-1).

Example 2-1 Charles Griffes, *In a Myrtle Shade,* measures 3-4



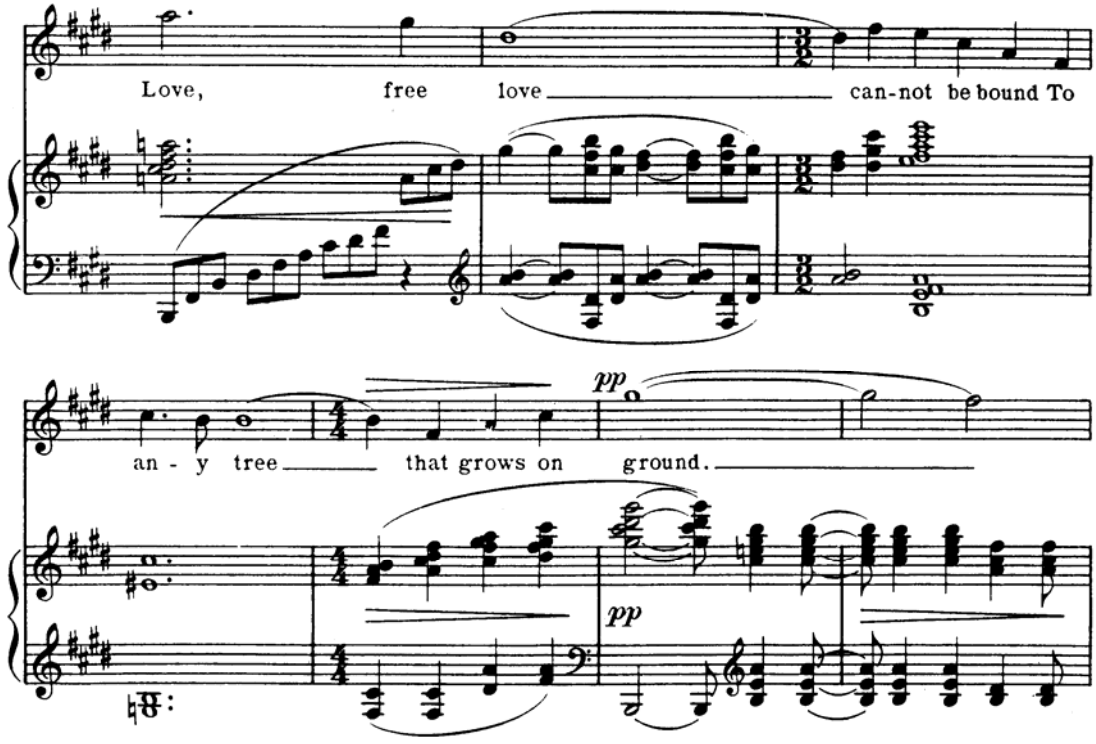
Later it begins to acquire more intensity by means of chromaticism, increased dynamic level, higher vocal range, as well as more density in the piano accompaniment (Example 2-2).

Example 2-2 Charles Griffes, *In a Myrtle Shade,* measures 7-8



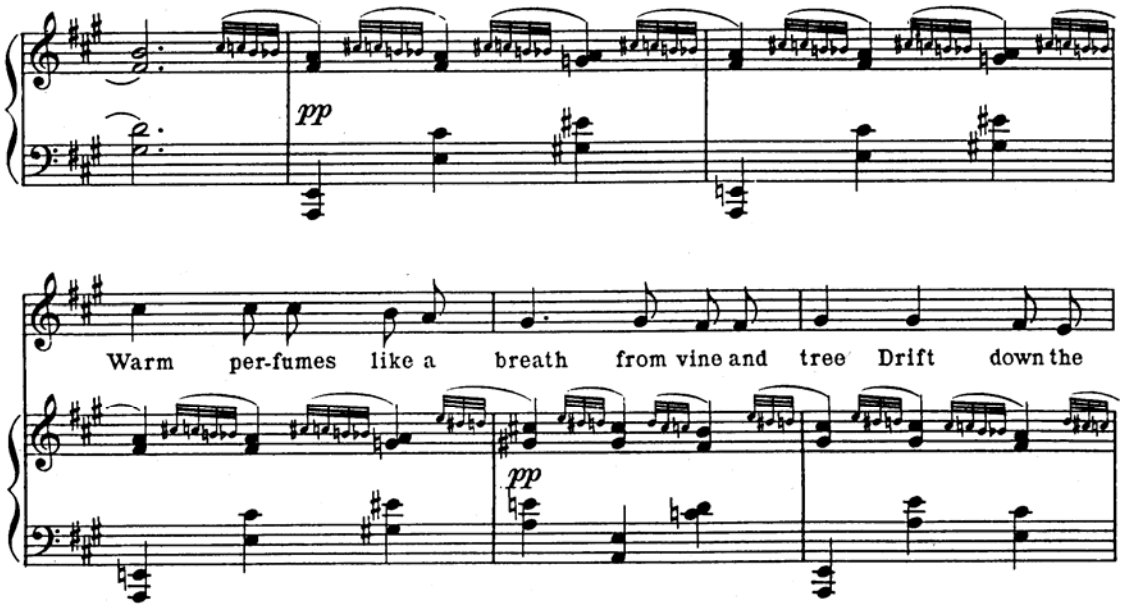
The increasing intensity evolves into a high-note climax for the text “love, free love”, and then goes on to end with a very expressive *pianissimo* in the voice for the word “ground” (Example 2-3). The harmonic language of the song is tonal. As if still asking the question in the poem “Why should I be bound to thee, O my lovely myrtle tree?” the song is harmonically unresolved, finishing on a dominant-ninth chord.

Example 2-3 Charles Griffes, *In a Myrtle Shade,* measures 19-25



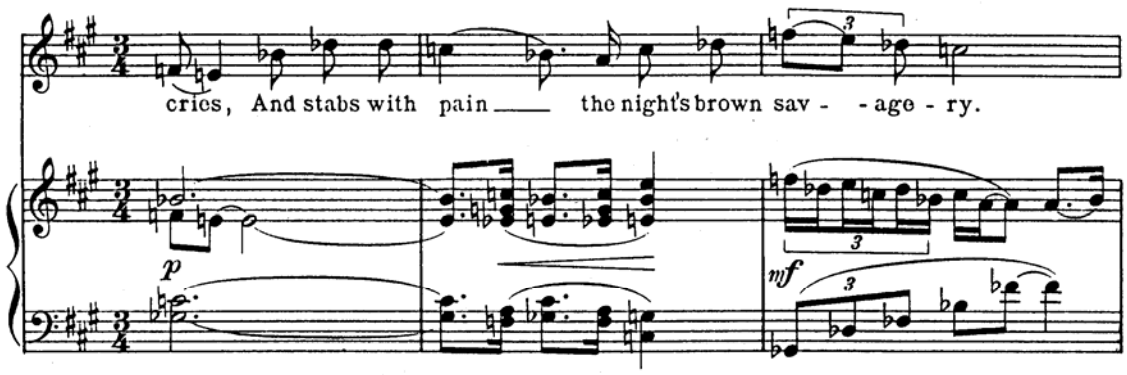
Waikiki (Op. 9, No. 2) is a very strong example of Griffes's creativity and uniqueness of style with its oriental features, aspects of impressionism, and even traces of German romanticism. In *Waikiki,* Griffes very successfully reaches one of the main goals of impressionism: capturing the general impression of a scene. Although not by means of a very characteristic French musical language, Griffes is so effective that one can almost sense the breeze near the sea and the perfumes to which the poem refers. Griffes manages this through the use of evocative musical figures such as the groups of 3 or 4 chromatic grace notes (Example 2-4).

Example 2-4 Charles Griffes, *Waikiki*, measures 5-10



In *Waikiki*, there are also oriental features such as the melodic use of the augmented second (Example 2-5).

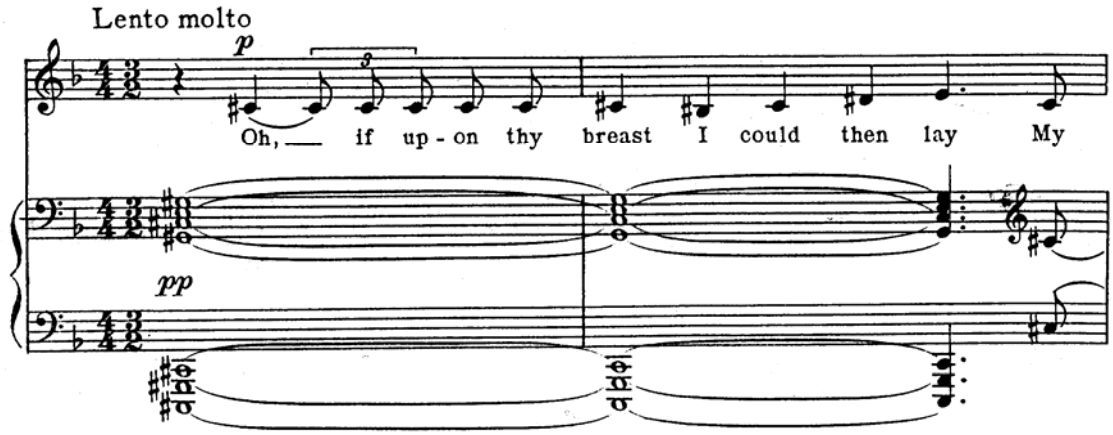
Example 2-5 Charles Griffes, *Waikiki*, measures 18-20



In *Phantoms*, an especially moving section is the *Lento molto* for the last lines of the verse: “Oh, if upon thy breast I could then lay my weary head and hear thee sing again that old sweet song, and as it dies away, exhale my spirit in its last refrain!” The initial declamatory style (reminiscent of Debussy), the slow tempo, the melodic

chromaticism, and the lower vocal range, make this last section very effective at the emotional level (Example 2-6).

Example 2-6 Charles Griffes, *Phantoms*, measures 24-25



2.2 Samuel Barber (1910-1981)

Samuel Barber, unlike many of his American contemporaries, did not try to work within the experimental trends that governed much of the twentieth-century music. He was deeply committed to vocal lyricism and to the tonal language and forms of the late nineteenth century. According to Barbara Heyman, there are three main influences that could explain Barber's consistent connection with these practices:

a) His formal music education at the Curtis Institute of Music, which was traditional and Eurocentric, with Rosario Scalero as Barber's main teacher.

b) An affinity for European culture that was enhanced by travels and residence there, as well as by his close friendship with Italian born Gian Carlo Menotti.

c) The guidance from his uncle, the composer Sidney Homer, who inspired in Barber an appreciation for some of the main musical figures of the nineteenth century, while at the same time encouraging him to follow his "inner voice".

Heyman also points out that Barber's non-revolutionary posture was also a consequence of his motivation for writing music: to express feelings.[6]

Barber's early works were based on very traditional procedures and his lyricism was mainly based on tonality. However, during his years in Europe (1935-37) he developed a more personal harmonic language that incorporated more chromaticism, where tonality began to be more often veiled. The lyricism continues to be present, but it is not so strongly related to tonality. In Barber's works, specific intervals can play an important role and there is also a wide use of pedal points. Barber developed an outstanding ability with counterpoint, not only as a consequence of his training under Scalero, but also because he admired and rigorously studied the music of J. S. Bach. Masterful polyphony and canonic imitation are trademarks of his work.[7]

Barber had training as a singer and was fluent in several languages (French and German, among others). He also had a wide knowledge and deep love for poetry. Therefore, it is not surprising that his songs (106 in total) are of the most important parts of his compositional output. Barber's vocal lines are fluid and always according to the rhythms of words. The form in his vocal works is strongly related to the structure of the poem.[8]

Several aspects of Barber's mature style and of the influence of European musical practices on his style can be appreciated in *Mélodies Passagères.* These songs are based on poems by Rainer Maria Rilke and were dedicated to Barber's friend, Francis Poulenc. *Puisque tout passe* is a strong example of Barber's mastery of counterpoint. The song is built on a basic theme. There is imitation between parts which

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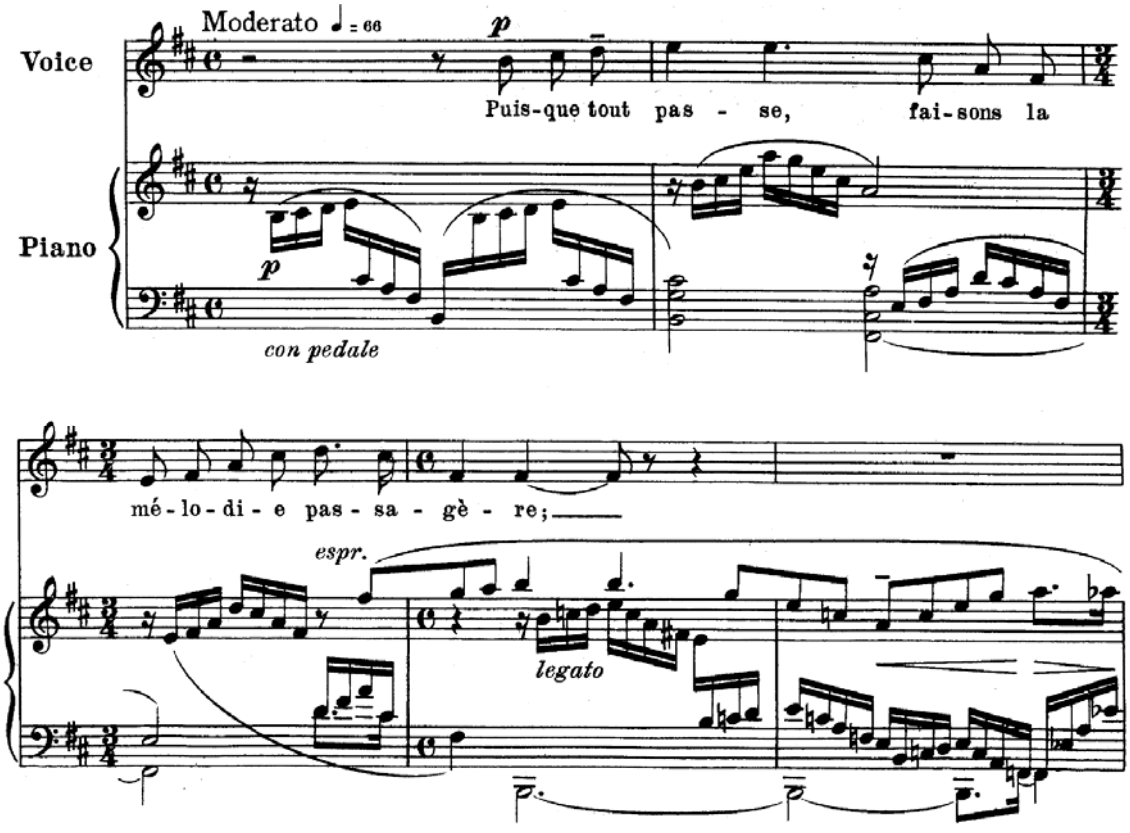
[6] Barbara B. Heyman, *Samuel Barber, The Composer and His Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 4-5.
[7] Nathan Broder, *Samuel Barber* (New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 1954), pp. 47-60; and John Browning, Preface to the recording of Samuel Barber, *The Songs – Complete*, pp. 9-11.
[8] Nathan Broder, *Samuel Barber* (New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 1954), pp. 47-60; and Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Style & Literature* (Redmond, Washington: PST...Inc., 2000), pp. 254-255.

present the full theme or fragments of it. For example, the voice introduces the theme in the first measure and then the right hand of the piano initiates the imitation in the pick-up to measure 4 (Example 2-7). The full theme is presented five times during the song, once by the voice, three times by the right hand of the piano, and one time in a shared presentation by the voice and the left hand of the piano. The theme is never presented again in its original version. Each presentation has a slight rhythmic or melodic variation and most are transposed.

Example 2-7 Samuel Barber, *Puisque tout passe*, measures 1-5

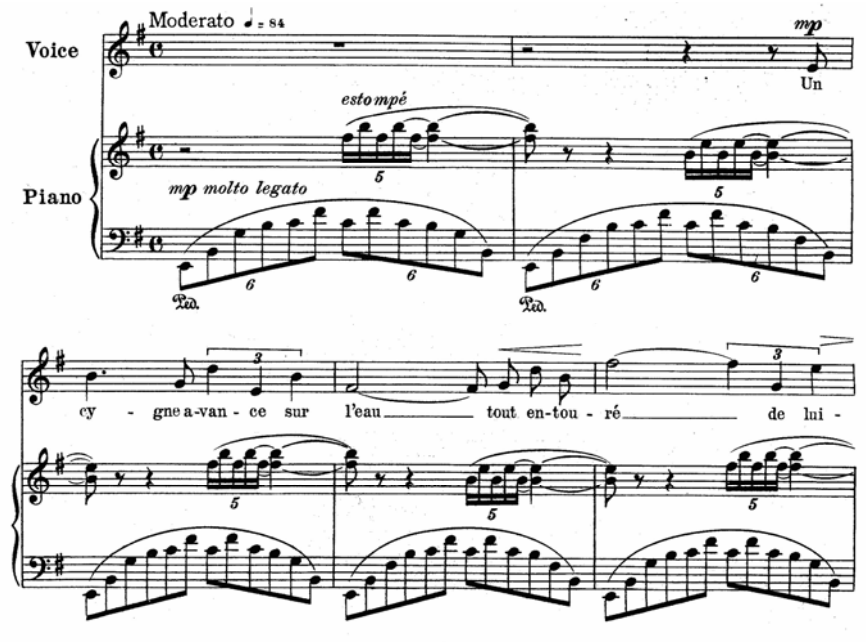


Barber also makes use of figurative patterns in the accompaniment that are closely related to the main theme. For example, the pattern that appears in the piano (Example 2-7, measure 1, beats 1 and 2) is a diminution of the first part of the main theme. In a similar way, the pattern found in the first two beats of the third measure, although less exactly, also shares features with the second half of the main theme

(Example 2-7, measures 3 and 4). These gestures are used throughout the song and, like the main theme, they are also transposed or altered.

In *Un cygne*, it is possible to appreciate another aspect of Barber's mature musical language —its rhythmic complexity. Throughout the piece there are duple, triple and quintuple subdivisions of the beat. Sometimes these subdivisions occur simultaneously as in the last two beats of measure 4 (Example 2-8). Barber's capacity to create images through musical figures is also evident in *Un cygne*. The constant movement of the left hand of the piano in groups of six triplet eighth-notes generates a sense of constant and smooth flow that is comparable with the smooth movement of the swan in the lake. In a similar way, the recurrent quintuplets in the right hand of the piano can be easily associated with images in the poetry such as "glissant tableau" (gliding image) and "tremblante image de bonheur et de doute" (trembling image of happiness and doubt).

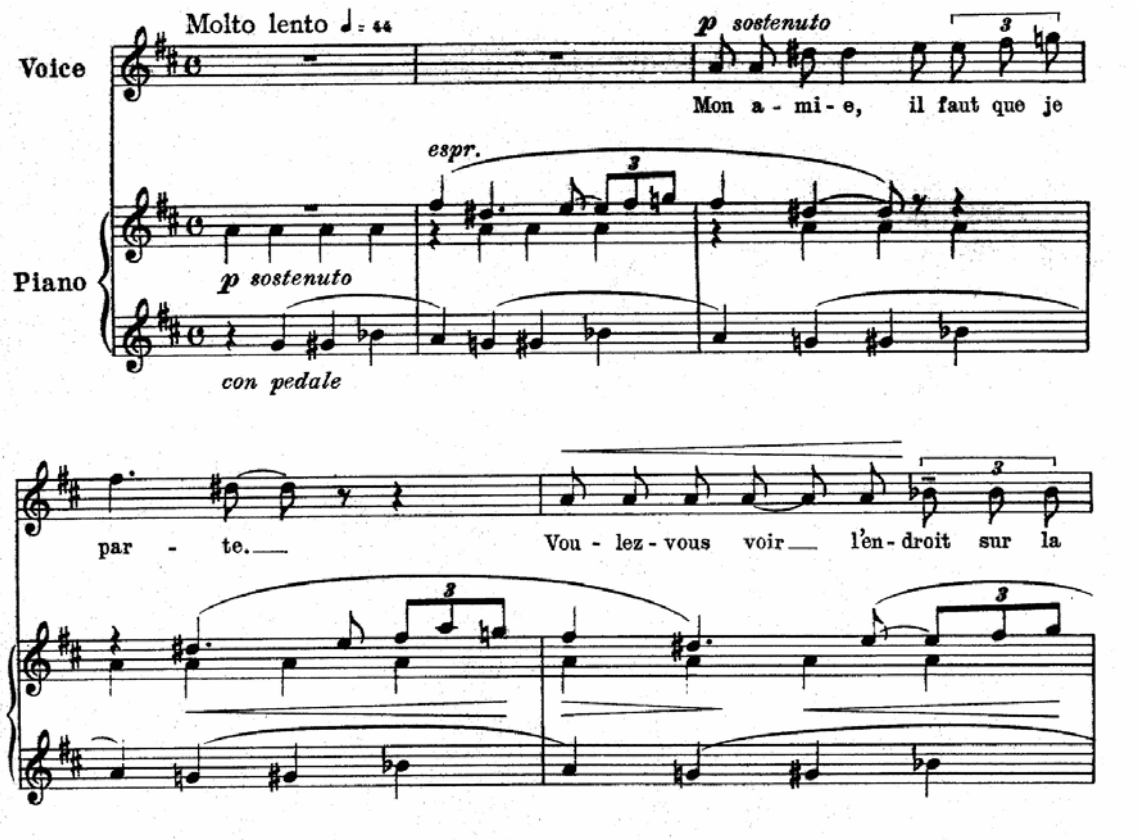
Example 2-8 Samuel Barber, *Un cygne*, measures 1-5



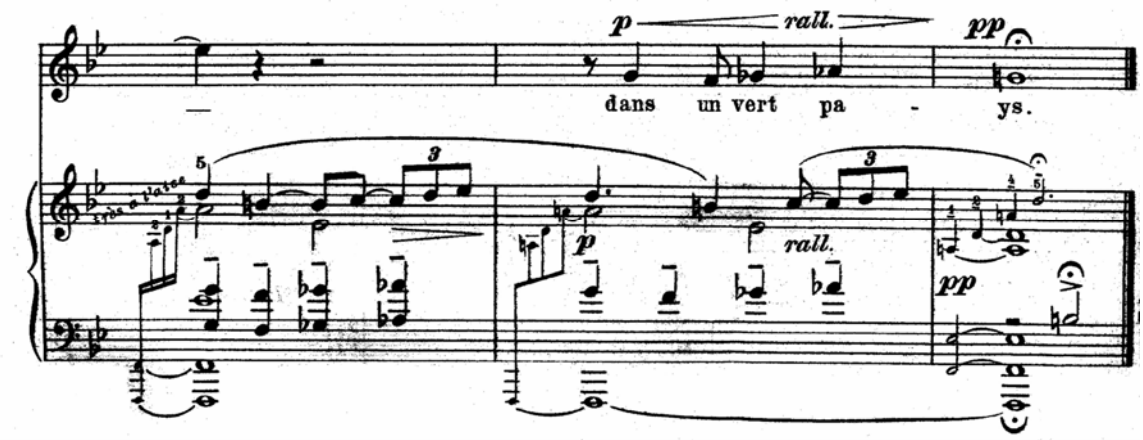
Départ, the last song of the cycle, has another characteristic feature of Barber's style: the use of pedal points. Here, the pedal tone is A. This note is present in every beat of the song, but not always in the same part. It can be in the voice, or in either of the

hands of the piano (Examples 2-9.1 and 2-9.2). A tritone appears in every measure of this song (with the exception of the first measure), suggesting the uncertainty of the character in relation to his departure to another country. In the first eleven measures the tritone is A-D#, and in the last 5 measures, it is F-B. *Départ* also has a semi-chromatic ostinato in quarter-notes (G-G#-B^{b}-A). The original statement of the ostinato finishes precisely in the pedal tone A (Example 2-9.1, left hand of the piano). At the end, the ostinato is transposed, and the last statement of the ostinato is presented by the voice part arriving at G. At the melodic level the song's general trajectory is a slow movement from A to G (Examples 2-9.1 and 2-9.2). Interestingly, the original statement of the ostinato is a movement in the opposite direction —from G to A (Example 2-9.1). Both the ostinato and the song's melodic trajectory represent movement from one place to another, which is consistent with the text's concept of a person who is moving to another country.

Example 2-9.1 Samuel Barber, *Départ*, measures 1-5



Example 2-9.2 Samuel Barber, *Départ*, measures 14-16



Like Benjamin Britten, Charles Griffes and Jean Coulthard (whose style is going to be discussed later in this document), Samuel Barber made the decision not to follow some of the avant-garde musical trends that were in fashion during his lifetime. Instead, Barber developed his own musical language rooted in late-romantic European practices. He progressively incorporated some twentieth-century elements only when he thought that it would enhance the expressive possibilities of his art.

2.3 Ned Rorem (b. 1923)

Having composed almost 400 songs, Ned Rorem is probably the most prolific art song composer of the United States. As a child, Rorem had piano lessons with Nuta Rothschild. She introduced him to the music of Debussy and Ravel, and this made a lasting impression on Rorem for the rest of his life. Rorem came to love French music and all things French.[9]

In 1948 Rorem was awarded the Gershwin Memorial Award for his *Overture in C.* Rorem decided to use the thousand-dollar prize to travel to France for three months,

[9] Arlys L. McDonald, *Ned Rorem, A Bio-Bibliography* (Westport, Connecticut: Greewood Press, Inc., 1989), p. 3.

but he ended up staying nine years. However, Rorem has said that he did not become French because of living in France; Rorem says that he was already French when living in the USA. As mentioned before, his "being French" began in his childhood when introduced to the music of Debussy and Ravel. The French aesthetic and especially French impressionism became deeply rooted in his own sensibilities.[10]

In Paris, Rorem studied at the École Normale de Musique with Arthur Honegger. Rorem also gained the patronage of the Vicomtesse Marie-Laure de Noailles. Her patronage not only meant financial support, but also the opportunity to become part of the literary and musical circle of Cocteau, Auric, and Poulenc.[11] Poulenc became Rorem's friend and a deeply admired artist. Rorem once said of Poulenc: "He is among the magic few. Without his art, my world would weigh less."[12]

Anthony Tommasini explains that one of Rorem's most prominent attributes in song writing is his outstanding skill at prosody. Rorem sets words with extraordinary naturalness and clarity. Tommasini also states that Rorem aspired to be "an American Poulenc", and that Rorem's songs have Poulenc-like restraint, wit, elegance, and direct yet unsentimental expressivity.[13]

Two of Rorem's miniature-scale songs illustrate his strong sensitivity and ability to respond musically to poetry. In *Little Elegy* Rorem's use of economy, directness, and unsentimental expressiveness is noteworthy. The approach to text-setting is neither recitativo-like nor extremely lyrical. The comfortable middle range of the vocal line allows a clear delivery of the text, and the frequent but short melismas do not distort the poetry. The piano part, which is made of successions of chords in scale-like motion,

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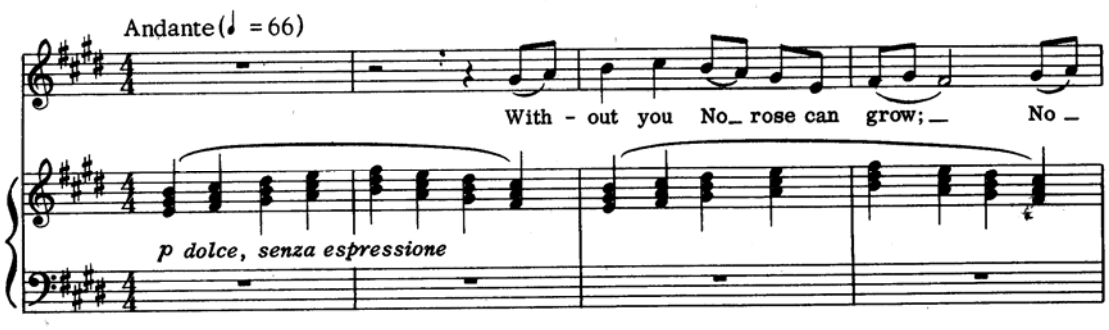
[10] Ibid. p. 6.
[11] Anthony Tommasini, "Ned Rorem", *Grove Music Online* ed. L. Macy (Accessed 26 April 2005), Site address: http://www.grovemusic.com
[12] Alfred J. Lang, "New American Classics Written for Brass Ring" in *American Music* (winter 1998, accessed 26 April 2005), Site address: http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2298/is_4_16/ai_55849961
[13] Anthony Tommasini, "Ned Rorem", *Grove Music Online* ed. L. Macy (Accessed 26 April 2005), Site address: http://www.grovemusic.com

works as a very subtle background over which the voice seems to float. The indication at the beginning of the piano part is *piano, dolce, senza espressione;* the mark *espressivo* is written only at the end of the song when the piano borrows the melody from the vocal line. Part of the success of this miniature song (sixteen measures long) is precisely its simplicity, which helps to create the mood of desolation suggested by the text (Example 2-10).

Example 2-10 Ned Rorem, Little Elegy, measures 1-4

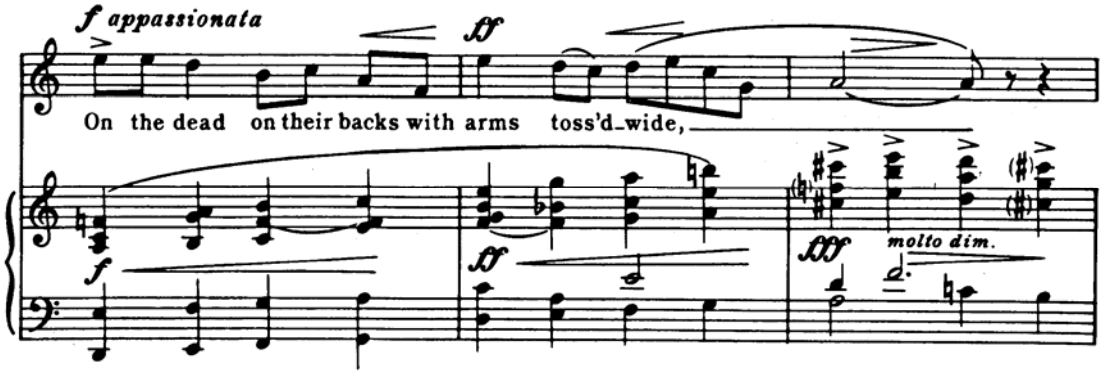


Rorem's treatment of the melody creates the sensation that something or someone is missing. He uses the same melodic pattern twice for different verse lines as in a varied strophic form. At the end of the song, the right hand of the piano begins to play the melody that the voice has stated earlier. However, this last statement is left incomplete.

Look Down, Fair Moon is another miniature-scale song (twelve measures) which contrasts with *Little Elegy.* Rorem's style is an authentic response to each poem, and therefore, his style can change considerably from one song to another. In spite of its short duration, *Look Down, Fair Moon* has strong changes in mood that occur quickly but not suddenly. One key factor for these changes is the dynamic level which in the vocal line moves between *p* and *ff,* and in the piano part between *pp* and *fff.* Another factor is the harmony which reaches higher levels of dissonance for the words "On the dead, on their backs with arms toss'd wide." For this part of the text Rorem used parallel ninths (Example 2-11, measure 6, left hand of the piano part) as well as dissonant chords. Note for example the chord for the word "dead" which is made of the notes D-E-

F-G-A-B. Another similar example is the chord for the word “arms”, which is made of the notes C-D-E-F-G-B and which occurs when the voice reaches its highest dynamic level (Example 2-11).

Example 2-11 Ned Rorem, *Look Down, Fair Moon,* measures 6-8



Although Rorem is an American composer, he is also an artist with strong ties to French music and French aesthetics in general. Rorem’s outstanding sensitivity and ability to respond musically to poetry have made him not only a very prolific song composer, but also one whose style is neither predictable nor limited to certain musical devices. Each song has its own personality and stylistic features due to Rorem’s strong connection with poetry.

Having strong artistic roots in the European continent is the main feature that unites the styles of Charles Griffes, Samuel Barber, and Ned Rorem. These three composers have also a profound literary sensibility and an outstanding ability to respond imaginatively to poetry. The songs of Griffes, Barber, and Rorem reveal a remarkable capacity to merge both old and new musical devices for repertoire that appeals to a larger general audience than that attracted to their contemporaries who pursued more avant-garde compositional styles.

3. EUROPEAN INFLUENCES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CANADIAN VOICE: JEAN COULTHARD, VIOLET ARCHER, AND R. M. SCHAFER

3.1 Jean Coulthard (1908-2000)

Jean Coulthard consciously decided not to follow some of the musical trends of the twentieth century (e.g. serialism, experimentalism…) and therefore she was often considered old-fashioned. Coulthard explicitly stated that she was convinced that music should reach the heart. She found that some of those new trends were not appropriate for the type of thoughts and emotions she wanted to express. Additionally, Coulthard believed that there was no reason to ignore the musical past and stop using musical forms which had evolved for hundreds of years.[1]

Coulthard studied with some of the most prominent figures of her time in the field of composition. She lived in Europe in two extended periods and was influenced by European musical trends. First, she lived in London between 1928 and 1930 as a student of the Royal College of Music. There, she studied composition with Ralph Vaughan Williams. Later, in 1955 she went to France as a recipient of a Royal Society Fellowship. While in Paris she had some lessons with Nadia Boulanger. Although neither Vaughan Williams nor Boulanger became inspiring teachers for Coulthard, the time in Europe was very significant. She found a nurturing musical environment in both countries and took full advantage of every opportunity to attend first rate performances, to compose, and to conduct.[2] Coulthard also studied with Bernard Wagenaar, Arthur

[1] Information taken from fragments of an interview of artist Jerry Grey with Jean Coulthard. The fragments of the interview are reproduced in Eitan Cornfield's documentary on Jean Coulthard for the *Canadian Composers Portraits Series.* Canadian Music Centre, Centrediscs, 2002. CMCCD 8202 WRC8-7590.

[2] Eitan Cornfield's documentary on Jean Coulthard for the *Canadian Composers Portraits Series*. Canadian Music Centre, Centrediscs, 2002. CMCCD 8202 WRC8-

Benjamin, and Gordon Jacob, and received tutoring from Arnold Schönberg, Darius Milhaud, Béla Bártok, and Aaron Copland.

Coulthard's close relationship with music began at home during her childhood. Her mother, Mrs. Walter Coulthard, was a pianist who broke new ground performing the works of the French impressionists in Western Canada.[3] In an interview, Coulthard noted that listening to her mother playing Debussy's works served as inspiration and encouragement to compose. Certainly, when considering composers who may have influenced Coulthard, Debussy should be taken into account. In David Duke's dissertation about Coulthard's orchestral music, he concludes that the clearest influence in her style was that of Claude Debussy, especially in four areas: concept of tonality, coloristic harmonic resources, rhythmic vocabulary, and orchestral color.[4]

It is very likely that Debussy also made an impact in Coulthard's vocal music. The song-cycles *Chanson du Cœur* (1979) and *Three Ancient Melodies from Greece* (1992) provide evidence of this influence. In these songs Coulthard alternates between two types of approaches to vocal writing: a) recitative-like passages and b) lyric passages. These two types of vocal writing are also present in Debussy's songs.

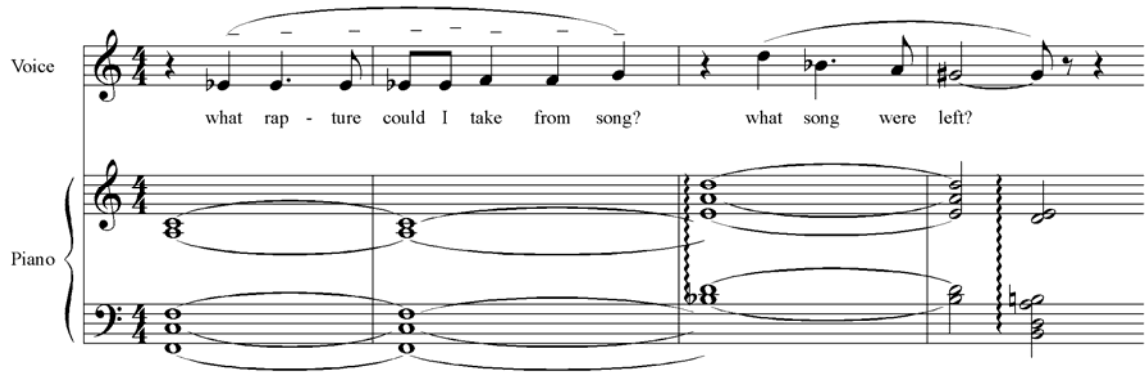
a) Recitative-like passages. The voice has a conversational quality. The vocal range is narrow and the rhythm is dictated by the text. These passages appear either a capella or with sustained or repeated chords in the accompaniment. Excerpts by Coulthard and Debussy are shown in Examples 3-1 and 3-2 respectively.

7590; and D. Maves, "The Art Songs for Voice and Piano by Canadian Composer Jean Coulthard: an Eclectic Analysis of Selected Works", p. 19.

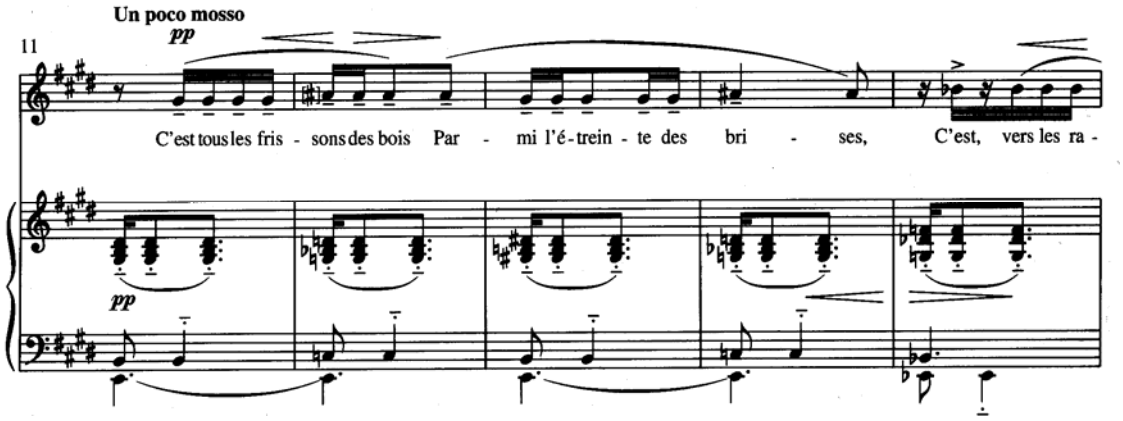
[3] D. Maves, "The Art Songs for Voice and Piano by Canadian Composer Jean Coulthard: an Eclectic Analysis of Selected Works" (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1997), p. 5.

[4] Ibid. pp. 5-6.

Example 3-1 Jean Coulthard, recitativo-like passage in *What rapture could I take from song?,* measures 22-25

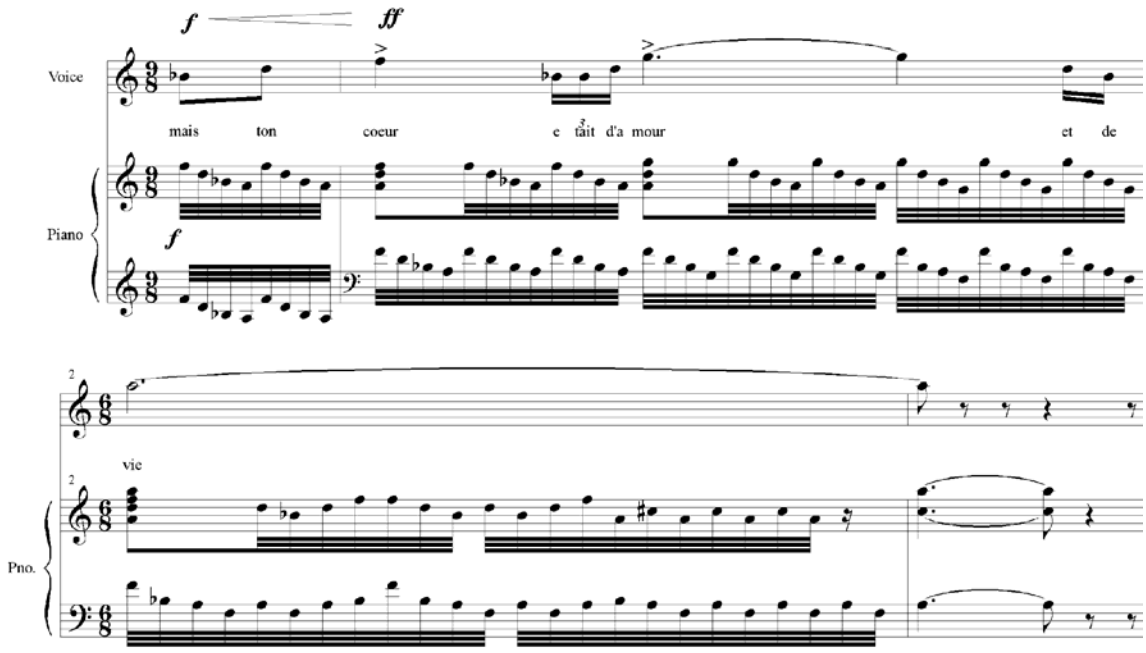


Example 3-2 Claude Debussy, recitativo-like passage in *C'est l'extase langoureuse,* measures 11-15

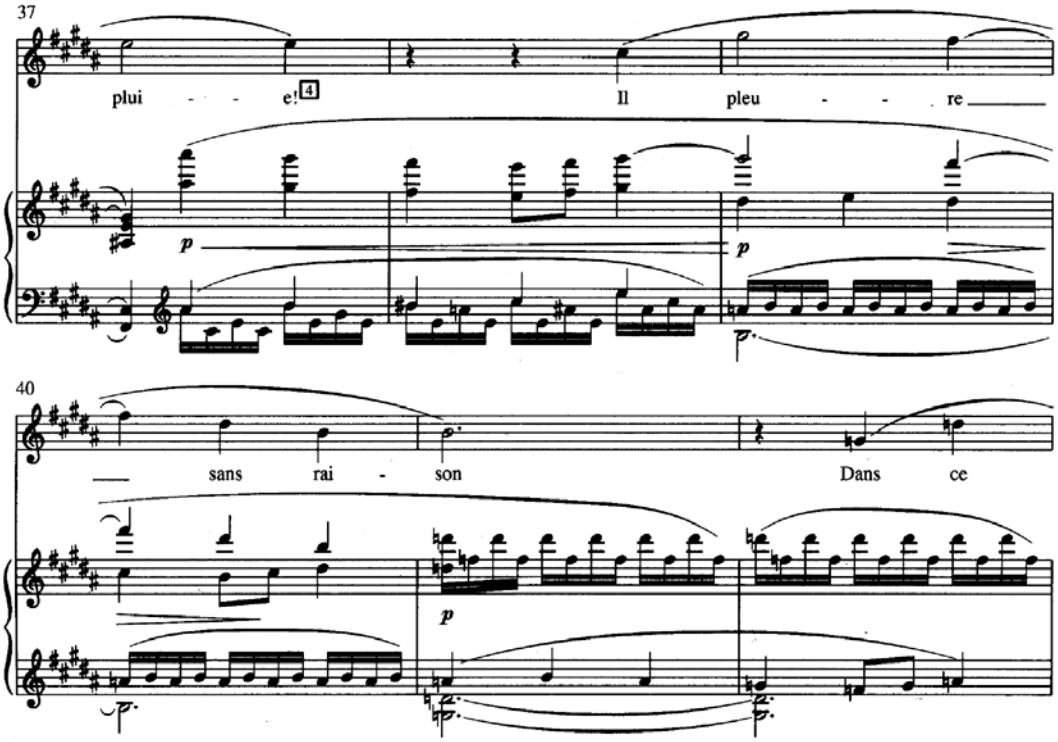


b) Lyric passages. The vocal range is more extended and piano parts are more elaborate. In these passages, the general design of both the voice part and the accompaniment is much more the result of an intention to express the emotions implied in the poem than of following the rhythmic features of the spoken text (Examples 3-3 and 3-4).

Example 3-3 Jean Coulthard, lyric passage in *J'ai fermé mon cœur,* measures 17-19

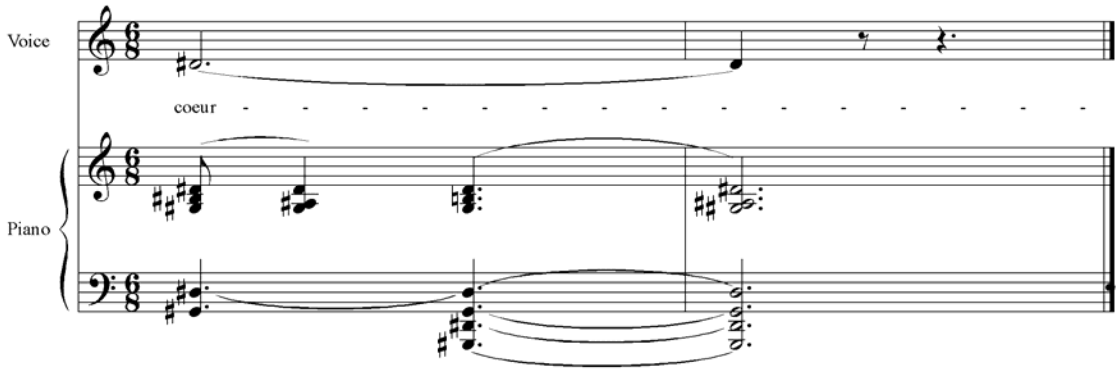


Example 3-4 Claude Debussy, lyric passage in *Il pleure dans mon cœur,* measures 37-42



As mentioned before, David Duke concludes that Debussy was a central influence in Coulthard's harmonic style. Although this statement is a result of Duke's study of Coulthard's orchestral works, it is very possible that it applies to her songs too. Coulthard's *Three Ancient Melodies from Greece* and *Chansons du Cœur* reveal some features that are characteristic of Debussy's harmonic language. Some of the features found in Coulthard's songs are: the use of tonal centres but avoidance of obvious cadences (e.g. V-I), major-minor ambiguity, and the use of a consonant 10^{th} chord slipping down to a 9^{th}. According to Roy Howat, this last resource constitutes a fingerprint of Debussy's musical language.[5] Both the tonal ambiguity (between G-sharp major and G-sharp minor) and the use of a consonant 10^{th} chord that moves to a 9^{th} are found in the last measures of Coulthard's *J'ai fermé mon cœur* (Example 3-5).

Example 3-5 Jean Coulthard, *J'ai fermé mon cœur*, measures 26-27



Jean Coulthard is a composer who worked consistently and diligently to develop her own compositional voice. Coulthard was very critical about the experiences she had with her various teachers and was always very active in the search of learning opportunities. Coulthard studied, respected and admired European musical heritage. She went to Europe to widen her artistic possibilities, and allowed European composers to have an impact on her style. She did not simply borrow or copy foreign models. All these European influences were an important part of the process of developing a style that is authentically hers and for which she is recognized as one of Canada's most prominent composers of art song.

[5] Roy Howat, "Claude Debussy. 10. Musical Language", *Grove Music Online* ed. L. Macy (Accessed 07 February 2005), Site address: http://www.grovemusic.com

3.2 Violet Archer (1913-2000)

Like Jean Coulthard, Violet Archer learned from European musical heritage but developed a personal style that is uniquely Canadian. Archer's musical language demonstrates awareness of the trends of the musical language in the twentieth century as well as recognition of the musical past.

Violet Archer's studies in composition include an undergraduate degree from McGill where she studied with Claude Champagne and Douglas Clarke. Later, Béla Bartók accepted her as a composition student and became a very important influence on her style. Bartók introduced her to Hungarian folk tunes and rhythms, and strengthened her awareness of modality and rhythm. He also encouraged Archer toward musical clarity and economy of expression. Bartók's influence in Archer's work is also evident in her continued interest in folk music as a source for her works.[6]

In 1947, Archer began her Master's degree at Yale where her composition teacher was Paul Hindemith. He had also a strong influence on Archer as a composer. Hindemith emphasized the importance of learning the fundamentals of harmony and traditional contrapuntal practices such as canon, fugue, etc. Archer admired Hindemith so much that she took every class he taught.[7] More evidence of Hindemith's influence is revealed in Archer's inclination toward Gebrauchsmusik[8] (utility music). After 1950, a significant portion of Archer's compositions have an educational purpose.[9]

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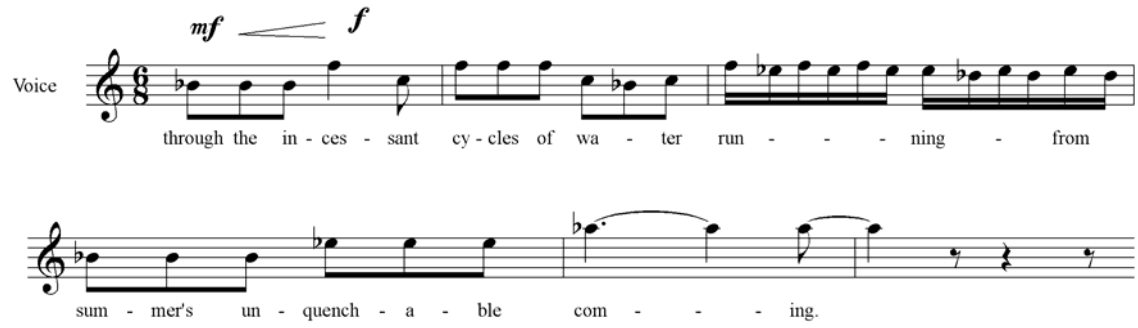
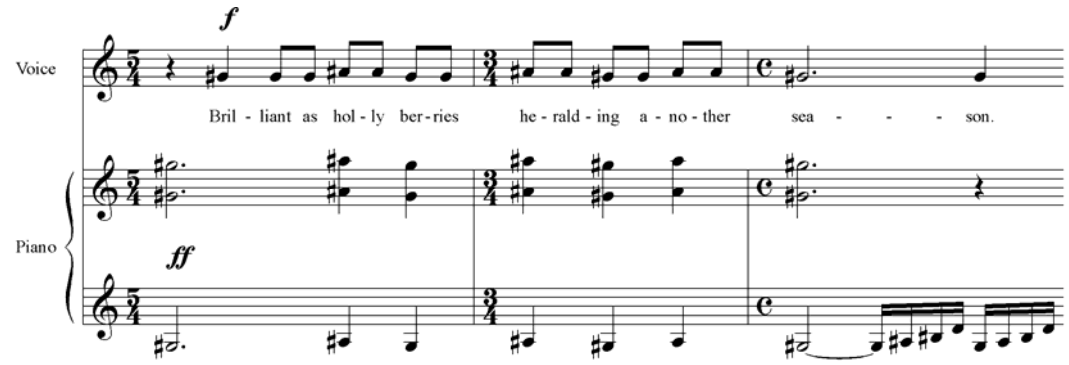
[6] Linda Hartig, *Violet Archer: A Bio-Bibliography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1991), pp. 2-3.
[7] Ibid. p. 3-4.
[8] According to Heinrich Besseler: "For the individual, Gebrauchsmusik constitutes something of equal rank to his other activities, something with which he has dealings in the way he has dealings with things of everyday use, without first having to overcome any distance, that is, without having to adopt an aesthetic attitude. With this in mind we might define the basic characteristic of Gebrauchsmusik as something with which we are directly involved". Quoted in "Gebrauchsmusik", *Grove Music Online* ed. L. Macy (Accessed 08 March 2005), Site address: http://www.grovemusic.com
[9] Elaine Keillor and Helmut Kallman, "Archer, Violet", *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada*, Second Edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), p. 36.

The song cycle *Songs of North* can be used to illustrate some aspects of Archer's compositional style. The choice of poetry for this cycle reflects an aspect of nationalism. It refers to the landscape, nature, and seasons of the Canadian North. There is variety in terms of the role given to the voice: very lyrical phrases (Example 3-6), recitative-like passages (Example 3-7), and *Sprechgesang* (Example 3-8).

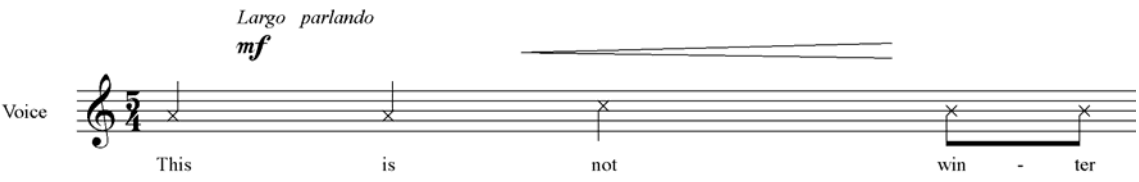
Example 3-6 Violet Archer, voice part of *The Ending of Snow's Dominion*, measures 27-32



Example 3-7 Violet Archer, *September Nativity*, measures 13-15

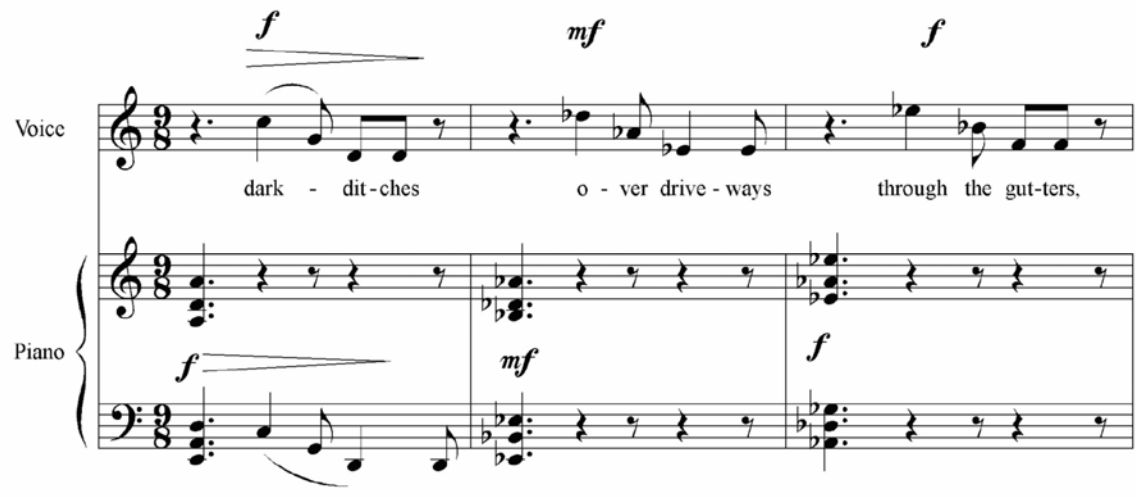


Example 3-8 Violet Archer, voice part of *September Nativity*, measure 22



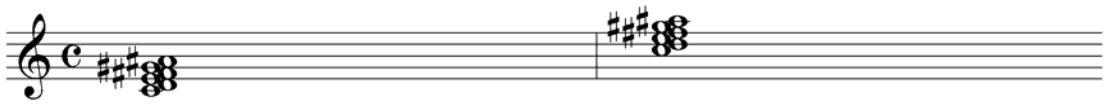
Archer used a variety of compositional resources throughout the cycle: quartal harmony, polychords, aspects of modality and tonality, whole-tone scales, and wide use of octave doubling. There are several fragments in which there is just a single melody played in two, three or four different octaves (Example 3-7). With this procedure, Archer is demonstrating that lack of independence in the parts does not mean lack of richness, colour, or expression. In fact, these passages are emotionally powerful. In *Songs of North*, Violet Archer also makes significant use of quartal harmony, and less frequently, quartal melody (Example 3-9).

Example 3-9 Violet Archer, *The Ending of Snow's Dominion,* measures 17-19



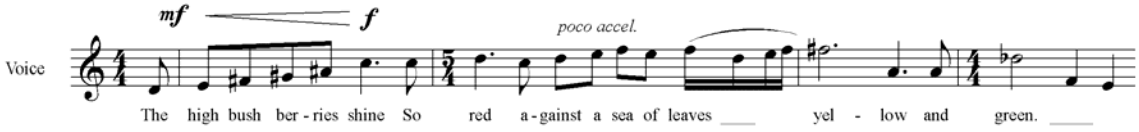
The melodic and harmonic use of the whole-tone scale is evident in *September Nativity.* In the first two measures of the song, the six notes of the scale are presented harmonically. This chord can also be read as a polychord made of two augmented triads with C and D as roots (Example 3-10).

Example 3-10 Violet Archer, right hand of the piano part of *September Nativity,* measures 1-2



From the third measure on, the scale begins to appear melodically in the piano part, and later in the voice part (Example 3-11). On the words “sea” and “leaves” the F is natural (which does not belong to the whole-tone scale), but very soon the melodic line “resolves” to the F# that belongs to the whole-tone scale. At the end of the phrase the melody unexpectedly moves away from the scale. The whole-tone pattern is otherwise always present during the song.

Example 3-11 Violet Archer, voice part of *September Nativity*, measures 7-10



Four of the five songs of the cycle have frequent meter changes, as well as significant use of mixed (asymmetrical) meters. In some sections of the songs, as in Example 3-7, the meter changes every measure. Besides that, the songs also reveal rhythmic freedom in the fact that the composer does not use a single rhythmic structure or a restricted group of note values for the entire piece. Archer skillfully changes meter and rhythmic patterns to create a variety of moods within each song. For example, in *September Nativity* there are note values as long as two tied whole notes and as short as 32nd notes, reflecting aspects of seasonal changes in the North.

In *Songs of North* Violet Archer cleverly uses the elements of music (melody, harmony, rhythm, texture, dynamic, etc.) to create songs which are not a simple description of the seasons but rather thoughtful statements about the human experience in relation to them.

3.3 R. Murray Schafer (b. 1933)

R. Murray Schafer is an internationally recognized composer. However, he is also linked with other arts and disciplines such as visual arts, literature, ecology, acoustics, and music education, among many others.

Stephen Adams explains that Shafer's predilection for vocal writing reveals itself early in his development. Among his most important early vocal works are *Three Contemporaries* (1954-56), *Minnelieder* (1956) and *Kinderlieder* (1958).[10]

Three Contemporaries (1954-56) is a very interesting work because the three songs in it are focused on artists with whom R. Murray Schafer has strong affinities. Two of the three artists are European and the group includes one composer (Benjamin Britten), one visual artist (Paul Klee), and one poet (Ezra Pound). Even in this early stage in Schafer's musical career, his eclectic artistic perspective is evident.

The first song of *Three Contemporaries* is dedicated to Benjamin Britten (1913-1976). There are several similarities between Britten and Schafer. Their compositional output is strongly related to words and both possess a wide knowledge of literature. They share similar theatrical inclinations, and a strong desire to contribute to society through their art. The second song of the group is dedicated to painter Paul Klee (1879-1940). According to Stephen Adams, Schafer claims that the artists of the Bauhaus,[11] especially Paul Klee, were some of the strongest influences on his development. Both Schafer and Klee have roots in German Romanticism, a deep love for nature, an inclination to recognize the importance of the subconscious in creation, and a satirical side.[12] The third and last song of *Three Contemporaries* is dedicated to American poet

[10] Ibid. p. 65.
[11] German avant-garde art and design school that was active between 1919 and 1933. Some of its major aims were: to unite the arts, take into account social or political concerns, combine artist and technician, and provide solutions to human basic and aesthetic needs. (Stephen Adams, 1983; Chris Snider, 1996).
[12] Stephen Adams, *R. Murray Schafer* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), p. 13.

Ezra Pound (1885 -1972). Like Schafer, Pound had interests and contacts in all the arts, had elevated reflections on the artist and society, tried to accomplish an educational task through his works, and included satire in some of his creations. Both Pound and Klee attracted Schafer's attention because of their search for economy in art and their interest in the area of perception.[13]

The texts of the songs *Benjamin Britten* and *Ezra Pound* are small biographical commentaries about each artist. In *Ezra Pound* a satirical approach is evident. The text of *Paul Klee*, conceived by Schafer and borrowing segments from the artist's personal diaries, describes Klee's ideals and viewpoints about art. *Paul Klee* can be used to illustrate some of Schafer's ideals as an artist. Schafer chose fragments from the diaries which reveal important features about Klee and at the same time reflect some of the stronger affinities between the two artists. The text makes allusion to Klee's force and clarity, his literary inclinations and his desire to unite architectonics[14] with poetry, his satire, and the ideal of simplicity and economy in art.

Economy is a word that best describes the song *Paul Klee.* One of the most interesting features of this piece is the relationship between the voice and piano parts. The two work in dialog with each other, rather than the piano merely accompanying the voice. It is interesting that 42 of 105 measures of the song are for solo piano, 27 are voice with a sustained single note or chord in the piano (as a pedal), and 4 are solo voice. In conclusion, in just 32 of 105 measures there is simultaneous activity in the voice and the piano parts. The introductory measures of *Paul Klee* are a good example of both the economy and simplicity of the musical language and the alternating activity in the voice and piano parts (Example 3-12).

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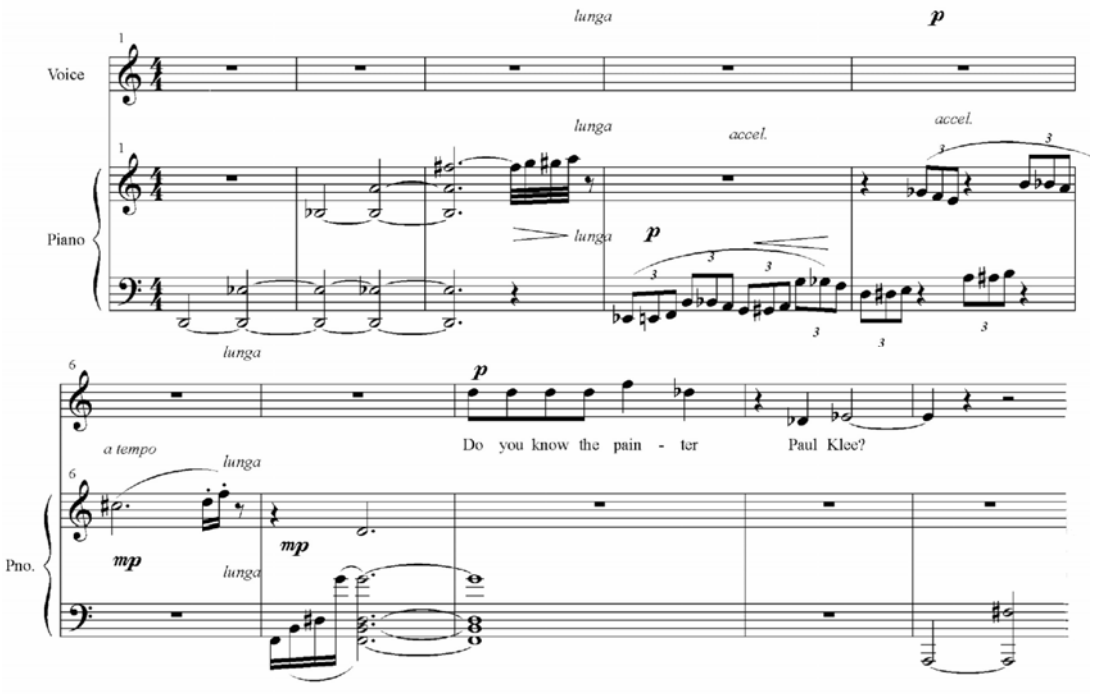
[13] Ibid. pp. 1, 5, 9; and Clive Wilmer, "Pound's Life and Career", *Modern American Poetry from The Oxford Companion to Twentieth-century Poetry in English by Oxford University Press* [Web Site] (Accessed 15 March 2005), Site address: http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/m_r/pound/bio.htm

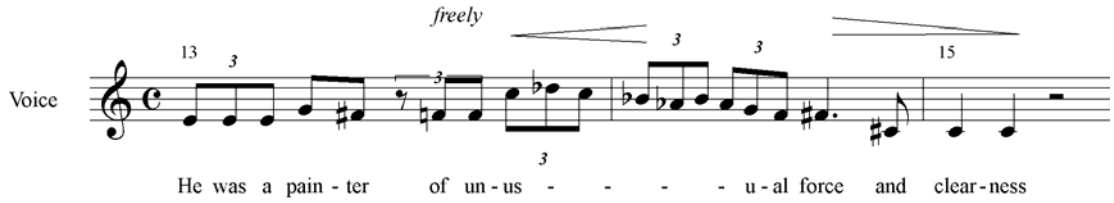
[14] Structural design; the science of architecture.

Example 3-12 R. Murray Schafer, *Paul Klee,* measures 1-10



The vocal line is highly chromatic and maintains a balanced combination of syllabic and melismatic writing (Example 3-13).

Example 3-13 R. Murray Schafer, voice part of *Paul Klee,* measures 13-15

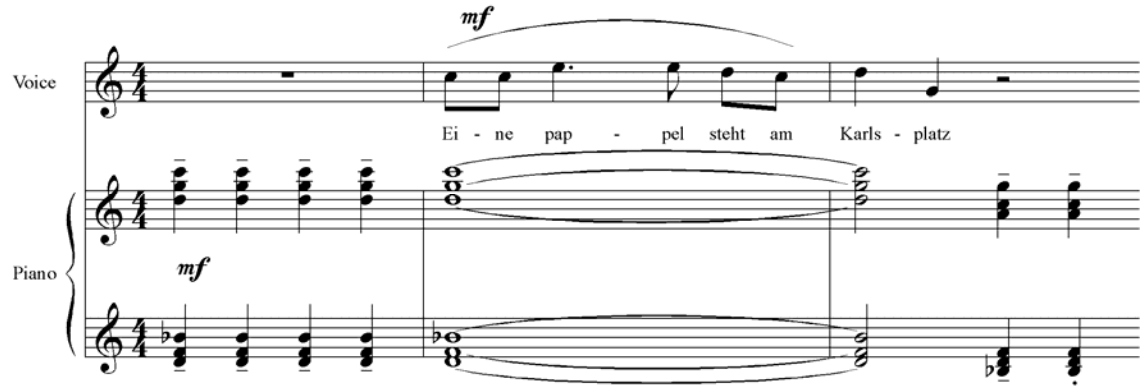


Some of Schafer's other features can be observed in *Kinderlieder,* nine songs for voice and piano composed in 1958 after he returned to Canada from Vienna. The majority of the poems are by Bertolt Brecht and, although childlike, they have a political aspect that anticipates Schafer's later inclination toward political and social concerns.[15] Stephen Adams explains that the harmonic language in *Minnelieder* (1956) is primarily

[15] Stephen Adams, *R. Murray Schafer,* pp. 67-68.

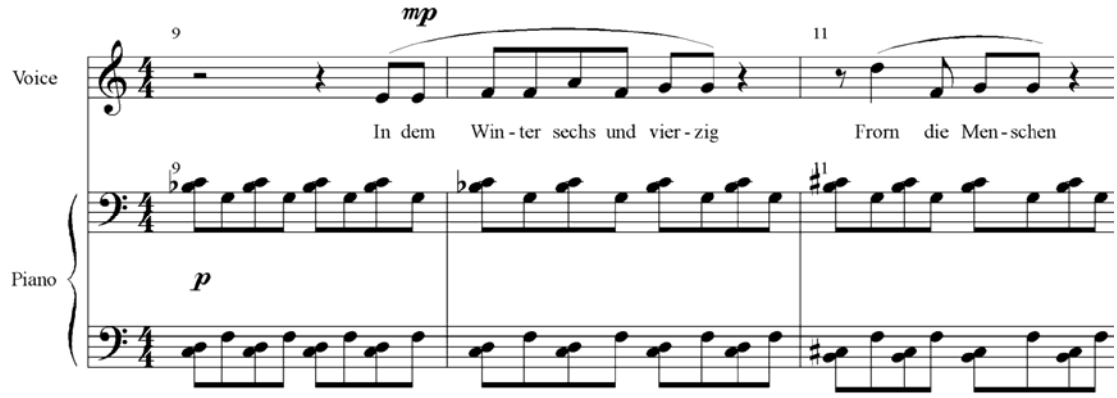
based on the triadic language of the German *Lied*, but "spiced" with chromaticism, bitonal clash, and quartal and added-note harmonies.[16] Examples of these features can also be found in *Kinderlieder*. For example, the first measures of *Die Pappel vom Karlsplatz* show a combination of triadic and quartal harmony (Example 3-14).

Example 3-14 R. Murray Schafer, *Die Pappel vom Karlsplatz*, measures 1-3



In *Kinderlieder* Schafer is also very effective in creating moods appropriate to the text. For example, in *Die Pappel vom Karlsplatz*, Schafer creates a mood of tension, bitterness, and harshness through the use of repeated patterns of major 2^{nds} (Example 3-15).

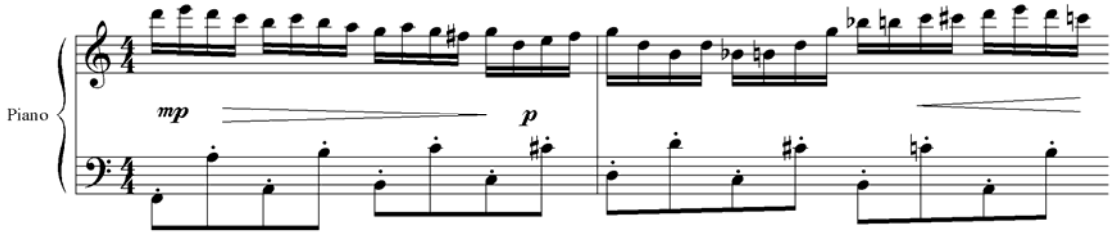
Example 3-15 R. Murray Schafer, *Die Pappel vom Karlsplatz*, measures 9-11



[16] Ibid. p. 67-68.

In *Hollywood*, the satirical character of the poem ("Every morning, to earn my bread, I go to the market where lies are bought. Full of hope, I line up between the salesmen") is vividly expressed by the piano part through an almost continuous pattern of sixteenth notes in one hand, and staccato eighth notes in the other hand (Example 3-16).

Example 3-16 R. Murray Schafer, *Hollywood,* measures 1-2



Three Contemporaries and *Kinderlieder* are early works in R. Murray Schafer's career and they cannot be taken as a sample of his mature style. However, they reveal some of the composer's major goals and ideals as well as which artists and artistic trends were influential. *Three Contemporaries* and *Kinderlieder* reveal the strong influence of the artists of the Bauhaus and of German Romanticism. Later works by Schafer are very different in scope and style, but still show some of the artistic ideals that were evident in his earlier compositions (contribution to society, willingness to unite the arts, and theatrical inclinations, among others).

Jean Coulthard, Violet Archer, and R. Murray Schafer studied European artistic trends and now are among Canada's most distinguished and internationally acclaimed composers. Each one took a different path toward their development as composers, and each achieved an individual style that has become part of Canadian musical identity.

CONCLUSIONS

After reviewing the evolution of solo song in Great Britain from John Dowland to Benjamin Britten, it seems clear that finding a musical identity and gaining international recognition has not always been easy for British composers. Furthermore, it is ironic that despite the excellence of British literature this country has not been a leading force in art song composition. However, in specific moments of British history, single composers or groups of composers have been able to make significant contributions to the genre.

In the period covered by this document, John Dowland, Henry Purcell and Benjamin Britten were the three composers that most successfully developed a British voice, being able to set the English language in a way that takes full advantage of its expressive power. These three composers allowed musical influences from the European continent to make a significant impact on their styles. Each one of them was able to assimilate and incorporate a variety of elements, developing a distinctive style. Dowland, Purcell and Britten enjoyed a close relationship with words, and carefully selected texts for their songs. They responded to text in very creative ways using all the musical resources available to give full expression to words without devoting themselves to any fixed compositional formulas. Purcell and Britten each composed a significant number of works for the stage which very likely influenced the manner in which they used the voice in their songs.

The composers of the so-called British Musical Renaissance (1860-1940) made a conscious effort to find a British musical identity. They raised the standards of song composition compared with that of the Victorian era and created a body of repertoire that constitutes a significant part of the British art song repertoire. In particular, the songs of Ralph Vaughan Williams have become part of the international standard repertoire. However, the strong desire to find a national identity and the traditionalist

inclinations of the British musical establishment (led by Parry and Stanford) narrowed the expressive possibilities of some of the composers of this period. In any case, the evolution of art song during the British Musical Renaissance was an important process that enabled later figures (such as Benjamin Britten) to develop a more individual and eclectic version of British voice.

> Composers from Canada and the United States have also looked to the European continent in their search for master composers and musical trends. Although there is evidence of British influence, these composers share stronger ties with Germany, France, Italy, Russia, and Hungary.
>
> In the United States, a parallel can be made with Great Britain if we compare composers that are considered national voices. The three most important national voices of Great Britain are precisely those composers who were more open to foreign influences: John Dowland, Henry Purcell, and Benjamin Britten. Charles Griffes, Samuel Barber, and Ned Rorem, who are considered among the most truly American voices in art song composition have compositional styles with strong roots in musical practices from the European continent.

The three composers from Canada reveal similar Eurocentric leanings. Jean Coulthard, Violet Archer, and R. Murray Schafer studied and admired European composers and artistic trends. The artistic heritage of mainland Europe has been for them an immense source from which to learn in the process of developing a Canadian sound profile.

Dowland, Purcell, Britten, Griffes, Barber, Rorem, Coulthard, Archer, and Schafer each share one significant factor: they have become models of the national voice of their own countries. However, none of them was or has been a fervent nationalist. Although some of these composers (e.g., Benjamin Britten, Ned Rorem, and Violet Archer) have used folk elements for some of their compositions, these elements did not constitute the main core of their styles or their compositional output. These nine

composers were able to recognize both the strengths and weaknesses of the musical art in their own countries.

These nine composers were very successful in their attempt to develop a personal compositional style by means of:

a) A significant study of musical and literary heritage
b) An open acceptance of foreign influences
c) Their own creativity and personal artistic values

Each one of them achieved a compositional style that is unique and that is now considered part of the musical identity of their native countries.

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